

THE MAD RANI & OTHER INDIAN STORIES

PHILIP ASHBY

1932
To the sweetest of all on our
first Christmas.

Bernard

THE MAD RANI AND
OTHER SKETCHES



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

THE MAD RANI

AND
OTHER SKETCHES OF INDIAN LIFE
AND THOUGHT

BY
PHILIP ASHBY

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.
BROADWAY HOUSE, 68-74 CARTER LANE, E.C.

1756 300 340

1800
1800
1800

1800 300 340

Printed in Great Britain by
F. Robinson & Co. Lowestoft

DS
421
A7
1922

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

The memorable journey which you and I made together last year round half the globe was a varied and delightful experience which neither of us will readily forget ; and I think it will interest you to know that there is a real, though not an obvious, connection between that journey (or rather series of journeys) and the production of these sketches. This connection is not obvious ; for, though we saw and heard many surprising things in the ports and cities of the Far East—from Burmah to China, from Manchuria and Japan to Honolulu—, these stories are in no way derived from those adventures ; but are, as you know, based entirely upon my own experiences in India during the quarter of a century preceding our travel. The connection however is none the less real : for, if it had not been for your industry, example and encouragement, I doubt if I should ever have troubled, or ventured, to set pen to paper at all. When we started down the Hoogly and sailed for many days eastward—ever eastward, my jaded condition might have been summed up in one comprehensive, contented sigh of relief : I wanted nothing but to sit on deck with the lightest of fiction, to gaze idly at sapphire seas, to chuckle over the dialects and manners of our cosmopolitan fellow-passengers, to loaf without official responsibility through the kaleidoscope of oriental bazars, and to contemplate with wonder (now happily divested of authority) the gorgeous shrines of Eastern religions, with the mysterious observances of their devotees : (you know—to your cost—my passion for temples ; often enough it has tried your

patience !) But *you* were not content with lotus-eating. I daresay you were really just as jaded as myself, after your several years of journalism in India with scarcely a holiday and never a hot weather in the Hills ; but you would not admit fatigue, or give way to indolence. Your Muse was quickened by the mud flats of the Hoogly, stimulated by the under-life of Rangoon, nourished in Malay by the very decay of the rubber industry, and brought to prolific maturity by sights and stories of opium-smuggling, of political intrigue and of famine administration in the ports and big cities of China. These activities of yours I watched unmoved : I wanted to see things, not to write about them. To make " copy " out of those priceless experiences of ours was perhaps beyond me ; at any rate to attempt it was too much like those interminable blue books and reports, of which I had had more than enough in twenty-five years of official life. So when we were aboard ship, I would doze over a novel, listening to the rattle of your type-writer, and murmuring

" Video meliora proboque,
" Deteriora sequor."

And when we were ashore, I would sometimes tramp alone round supererogatory temples, while you would be writing articles in the hotel about scenes we had already witnessed together. But when I came Home and the sense of leisure began to grow on me, when I found you in this country writing, still writing, I began to ask myself—" If *he* can make readable copy after a few hours' impression of a foreign scene or adventure, cannot *I* make interesting to the British public some of those Indian experiences which have taken me weeks, months, even years to live through ? " And so I began to write a little, and the *cacoethes scribendi* grew as I wrote ; and when I showed you the sketches as I finished them, you encouraged me with advice and criticism based upon your inside knowledge of the literary

world. So that is the reason why I am taking the liberty of dedicating these sketches to you and writing you this letter as a preface.

Some of your friendly criticisms are before me at this moment. While you envy my "wide knowledge of native life" and my first-hand material, you are inclined to deprecate my "direct unvarnished manner" and "close adherence to the truth." You exhort me to be more imaginative and dramatic, and to work up deliberately to "a tremendous climax—the unexpected if possible." You like the treatment of the later sketches in the series better than that of the earlier, because you think they show "a much surer touch." You are probably right; but from my own point of view the reason for this preference of yours is simply this: the first nine or so are facts, plain and almost unadorned, and I have drawn on practically nothing but my memory; while the later stories, though based on experiences equally true and almost as vivid, are woven together with some imagination, the coherence and development of the plot being in some cases invented. To illustrate your criticism of my "discursive" treatment, you even took the trouble to re-write one of my stories, "The Mad Rani," in the accepted sensational manner, with due regard to atmosphere, impressionism and dramatic climax. The story itself is, as you know, true; I have more than once told it to select hearers in India, and I have tried to relate it here almost exactly as it occurred. Your rendering of the same story is a most exciting piece of sensationalism, and I enjoyed it immensely; but I scarcely recognised my own experience: and indeed, to confess the truth, I do not think I am capable of treating any of my facts in that arresting manner, though I am quite sure that you are.

But apart from your example and encouragement, I have another and more serious motive in publishing these sketches. The constitutional reforms in India are now well advanced in the experimental stage: you and I saw more than a little

of their inception before we left India last year. The ultimate responsibility for confirming or abolishing, enlarging or restricting, this devolution of powers to the children of the soil, lies with the British Parliament. It is therefore of great importance that the British public should see something more than the troubled surface of Indian political life, should dive into the quieter and less advertised depths below, should appreciate, with some understanding and sympathy, the unfamiliar mentality of the great Indian population, should in a word do what is so often impressed upon the patient bureaucrat, that is, 'get under their skin.' In these stories I am trying to show to anyone who will read them, how the Indian mind actually and habitually works. Their religious, philosophical and moral conceptions are different from ours : you may say, if you like, (Indians often say it themselves with pride), that their ideals are spiritual, whereas ours are material : at any rate they are different. Their standards of thoroughness in industry, of accuracy in the spoken word, of courtesy, honour, and sincerity in social behaviour, are difficult for us to understand. I do not say they are inferior. Anyone who reads "The Honour of Caste," "The Gate of Bathing," or "Satti," will I think acquit me of any want of sympathy with Indian ethical feelings ; indeed one friendly critic, to whom I have shown these sketches, has rather reproached me because in depicting oriental ideals I have omitted to exhibit a better way, a higher light—the way and the light of Christianity. But my object is not to apportion praise or blame, still less is it to proselytize : it is simply to understand, and help the reader to understand, how India actually thinks, feels, speaks and acts ; and I hope and believe that these stories, if recognised as substantially facts and not as sensational fiction, will show, in a sufficiently interesting manner, how profoundly different the mind of the East still is from the mind of the West.

This difference is illustrated every day in the use of

language and the meaning of words. I will not offend English eyes with vernacular terms : but you know as well as I do, that there are dozens of English words which subtly change their meaning when they fall from Indian lips. And this is not because Indians are bad linguists ; on the contrary they are far more apt in our language than we are in theirs : the reason is that they *think* differently, and therefore many a familiar English word acquires a new nuance when it is spoken in India. I mean nothing offensive when I remind you that the term " gentleman " has a different connotation out there from what it bears at Home : so true is this, that when out East we want to express the *old* meaning, we fall back (ironically enough) upon an Indian word " sahib." Or take the companion word " lady." When in the early part of sketch XX* a famine supervisor speaks of female coolies as " ladies," that is not an invention of my own. An Indian officer in charge of one of my own famine works a few years ago used the word to myself in alluding to some women labourers who were digging earth for three half-pence a day. Other words, harmless in themselves, become almost offensive because they wound the vanity. For instance " *babu* " is a Bengali title of respect and dignity, but has acquired a connotation of contempt : " Eurasian " simply means what it says ; but the term has become so unpopular that it is now taboo, and " Anglo-Indian " has to be wrenched from its proper meaning to fill the gap. Consider again the political watchwords of today e.g. non-violence, *swaraj*, non-cooperation, responsibility : all these simply represent lip-service to a policy which, based as it is upon confusion of thought, preaches one thing and does another. " Non-violence " is merely a catchword covering the inflammatory agitation which resulted in the outrages of Malabar and Gorakhpore. " *Swaraj* " ought to mean self-government resting upon a man's ability to control his own passions, children, followers and subordinates, and associated with a willingness to obey elders and constituted

authorities ; but in practice it is the antithesis of all these qualities, and shows itself as a resistance to all discipline, leading to anarchy. Quite recently a prominent nationalist laid it down that "*swaraj*" is to be attained only through non-cooperation ; that is, a nation is to learn to govern itself by isolation, by aloofness, by declining to work with those who have authority and power ! This is a counsel not only of negation, but of despair ; but it rests upon a mode of *thinking* which has to be reckoned with.

Many years ago, when I read a science called " Formal Logic," I used to think that the fallacy of equivocation or ambiguity was almost a childish quibble, a trap into which no rational man could fall ; for surely, unless a man be punning, he can only mean one thing by one and the same word. I know better now. Consider that portentous word " responsibility," with its opposite " irresponsibility." A man surely is responsible when his conduct is in accord with a principle, when he is prepared to *answer* for his actions before the authority, tribunal or code which embodies a set of standards, rules or principles. By an easy transition the word means, in politics, that an official is liable to give his account or answer to the body of the people through their elected legislature. Very well ; that may be all right in abstract politics : but the fallacy comes in when the bureaucrat (and I am proud to have belonged to that much-abused class) is stigmatised as irresponsible, and when that word is used obnoxiously to mean autocratic. Irresponsible, Good Heavens ! and why ? I suppose because he does not bring his administration to the test of oriental ideas, or attune his actions to the standards of the people he is expected to govern. Irresponsible ! Is he *that* because he is prepared to answer, through a white Commissioner, a white Government and a white Parliament, to ethical principles which have their roots in the British nursery, the British middle-class home, the British public school ? Irresponsible ! Do people who call him *that* realise what it

means to be the only British-bred man in the district ; to live in social and moral isolation for months or even years together ; to have nothing to support the character and traditions of his race except the weekly mail from Home and his official correspondence with his chief a hundred miles away ; and all the time in court, camp and office to be surrounded by suggestions and standards which are oriental and alien ? I tell you, my dear William, that they buzz round you like a cloud of mosquitoes, they obsess your head and your heart like a languid vapour—these hints of intrigue, of tortuous motive, of nepotism, of self-deception, of personal favour ; this atmosphere of “ murawwat ”—an untranslatable Persian word which you may *feel* as courtesy, sympathy or kindly indulgence if you are oriental, but as insincerity, humbug or favouritism if you are British. Does the Indian nationalist really wish the administrator to yield to these influences of the bazar, of the landed interests, of the litigant, of the place-hunter ? Frame your policy by all means according to the wishes of the most enlightened of the people ; pass your laws in accordance with moral standards which they can understand. But for goodness sake let your executive official, hemmed in as he is with a web of conflicting castes, creeds and interests, let him continue, I say, to cling to his British aloofness, his insular prejudices ; and do not call him irresponsible because his motives are detached, his integrity impregnable, and his springs of action unintelligible to the welter of races around him.

So much for the “ irresponsibility ” of the effete bureaucrat ! But what of the “ responsibility ” of his successor ? Under the system now experimentally working the whole machinery of responsible government has been set up for several important departments. We have ballot boxes and electoral lists which are more or less democratic ; we have legislative councils packed with non-official majorities, and ringing with debates, resolutions and popular shibboleths ; we have in charge of far-reaching portfolios, Ministers

who are drawn from, and answerable to, these elected legislatures ; and we have, in order to give reality as well as colour to the principle of responsibility, a large and increasing Indianisation of all the public services. But do we find these indigenous authorities rising to high conceptions of national needs and statesmanlike principles ? Seldom, I fear : too often we see these councils undermining the maintenance of order, reviling the police, reducing military expenditure far below danger point, imperilling their country's financial integrity by rejecting taxes necessary to balance the budget, or pleading that murderers and bandits may be forthwith released from jails, or in the alternative treated with all the comforts of home, because forsooth the motives of their crimes have been " political," and their status in society is what is called " respectable." " Respectable " ! There's another word which bears a different meaning on Indian lips ; and again the reason is psychological rather than linguistic. For it all depends on what you feel respect for, doesn't it ? If it is for humble, unobtrusive virtues such as industry and honesty, then you will use the word as we use it at Home ; but if, as in India, it is for social position, wealth, power, or—above all—high caste, then you will apply the epithet accordingly. I remember once talking to an educated and influential Indian, who spoke English so fluently that I almost forgot I was conversing with a foreigner ; until he suddenly made me jump inwardly by using this word in its exotic sense. Discussing certain residents of the bazar, I remarked that A (whom I knew to be a hard-working cobbler) was a most respectable man. " Respectable, Sahib ! " echoed my friend in surprise ; " he is only a *môchi* ! " (that is, one of a low and despised caste whose hereditary occupation is to work in hides—a disagreeable and degrading material). It reminds one of Pooh Bah saying contemptuously of the three little maids from school—" They are not young ladies ; they are young persons."

I am glad to strike a lighter note as I draw this long letter to a conclusion : for after all I want in this collection of Indian reminiscences to divert the reader, as well as edifying him. And please don't imagine that all this time I have only been playing with words. That may be a harmless occupation at times ; but what is never harmless is playing fast and loose with *ideas* ; and we shall be doing that unless we enter into and appreciate the oriental way of looking at things. The Indian usage of these and many other words, in their own languages as well as in English, is not due to *mistake* ; it is due to their special habits of thought, aspiration and motive. As you know I have lived too long among Indians not to sympathize with their ambitions for progress, their hopes of self-government—ambitions and hopes which we ourselves have implanted. But I want to clear our minds of humbug and cant ; and I do want the British public to study the psychology of real India, before they plunge deeper into hazardous constitutional experiments. As Plato taught us, the “ lie in words ” is comparatively innocuous ; it is the “ lie in the soul ” which is fatal. For Heaven's sake, and for the lasting good of India, let us avoid the “ lie in the soul.”

Well, here's a happy Christmas to you at your end of the world.

Yours ever,

December, 1922.

PHILIP ASHBY.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
TWICE—HANGED	1
INDIAN HYSTERICS	5
THE HYSTERICAL FATHER	8
THE BUTCHERS' STRIKE	12
THE HONOUR OF CASTE	23
THE MAD RANI	28
THE RELUCTANT ADOPTION	36
THE 6 DOWN EXPRESS	41
THE PLAGUE RIOTS	47
THE GATE OF BATHING	57
REHOBAM'S REVENGE	64
THE POSTMASTER'S DAUGHTER	70
WATER	78
AN AMATEUR PARSON	89
A RELIGION OF BROTHERLY UNITY	97
INDIGO	103
RETRIBUTION	114
THE LADY-DOCTOR	125
"THE SUCCESSOR TO THE PROPHET"	138
"QUANTUM MUTATUS AB ILLO HECTORE!"	147
THE TRIDENT	159
A NEW ABRAHAM	172
SATTI	183
STROPHANTHIN	189
THE GIRL OF GREAT PRICE	197
A VICTIM OF POLITICS	208
THE SARJU BRIDGE	218
TWO WOMEN	230

THE MAD RANI AND OTHER SKETCHES

TWICE—HANGED

The execution had been fixed for six in the morning, and the pitiless sun of June was already pouring menacingly into the jail, as the Civil Surgeon and the Assistant Magistrate entered the hanging enclosure. There had been no rain for eight months, save for a few showers in January, and though the burning west wind, dust-laden from the distant deserts, would not spring up for two or three hours, the grim masonry walls and grey mud floors of the jail radiated the accumulated heat of many weeks, during which the thermometer had seldom descended to double figures except for an hour or two at dawn.

Two men convicted of murder—their appeals rejected and their sentences confirmed by the High Court—were to be hanged this morning, and from the gaunt scaffold in the middle of the enclosure dangled two sleek ropes terminating in nooses—ropes of special fibre and fresh from the factory, ropes tested for drops and jerks with heavy sacks of grain, ropes suggestive, cruel, relentless. The armed police guard with fixed bayonets, representing the majesty of the law, stood to attention as the Civil Surgeon and Assistant Magistrate came in. The former as superintendent of the jail was responsible for all the arrangements; the latter represented the District Officer and the Executive, and was there merely to see

that order was kept and that the sentence of the law was carried out. At a signal from the jailor the two condemned murderers were brought in by jail-warders, and led up the sloping ramp to the trap beneath those ominous ropes, where the executioner—an expert of special and low caste—deftly drew the caps over their heads and adjusted the nooses close round their necks with a grimly professional air. Then all but those two left the scaffold, the prisoner-coolies braced themselves to open the trap, and the jailor read aloud in vernacular the sentence of the Court. “It is the order of the Sarkar,” he cried; and at the last word the coolies pulled the supports away, the trap opened downwards, and, as the European officers averted their eyes, two figures, their bodies limp, their heads covered with the caps, fell with a sickening thud into the vacancy of the pit below.

But was that only a sickening thud? Was there not some other sound? One figure hung at the end of its rope, lifeless, motionless except for a few twitchings of the legs. But where was the other? Above, half of the rope still quivered with the shock; below, with the other half round his neck, writhed the second man bleeding, still alive, half conscious. The rope, sleek, special, fresh, tested, had broken! And there was in the jail no other rope suited to this ghastly work, save only that from which still swung the dead man. And the departmental rule was that a hanged man should not be cut down for one hour after the drop—in case of accidents! And so for an hour more the sound rope was not to be available, and the trap not to be raised again. And the pitiless sun poured down, gathering in fierceness. The

Civil Surgeon went to the dead body, and sounded it. Life seemed extinct ; but accidents *might* happen, and rules were rules. So the two officers decided to compromise at half an hour, while the warders partly led and partly carried the half-hanged man into another enclosure. Thence, as the hot, slow minutes passed, sounds came, soft and then louder. The man was recovering consciousness and movement and speech. The jail hospital assistant was staunching the bleeding (caused by the body as it fell dashing against the wooden side of the pit); was coaxing the doomed wretch back to life and recovery! And for what ? That he might be hanged a second time! And the armed guard leaned apathetic on their carbines, and the coolies and warders squatted indifferent on their heels, while the two European officers paced up and down in the blistering glare, talking anything or nothing to subdue their nausea and to force the minutes to pass. It was not for them to condone or commute sentences ; they were there, under orders, to hang a man till he were dead, and hang him they would : they had no discretion in the matter.

And so they talked and looked at their watches till the sun had scorched that dreadful half-hour away. Then back to their inhuman task, while the guard and the warders came to attention again. The dead man, now stiff and chilling, was soon released from his noose and carried away to his relations ; the unbroken rope was raised into position ; the trap was re-adjusted ; the coolies returned to their posts ; and the stolid executioner again mounted the ramp, with the cap of death in his hand. Supported by warders, limping, crying, pleading for pity for his " bal bachchas " (little children), mutter-

ing hoarsely, but ever louder as he approached the scaffold and the officers, the miserable creature was pushed up the slope, and assisted to stand, as the noose was again arranged, and the blinding cap pulled down. Then the trap was released ; and the rope held ; for it had served its apprenticeship.

.

“ Thank goodness that’s over,” said the young Magistrate, as he signed the execution certificate, and rode off through the glare and dust haze to bath and breakfast. He was young then and not hardened to horrors. But though he has seen many pitiful and revolting scenes since then, and has witnessed the executions of not a few men and even women, he will never forget the shuddering grimness of that long half-hour in the hanging enclosure

INDIAN HYSTERICS

Hysterics, regarded as the temporary decontrol of the mental balance, the absorption of the self in one emotion, are in the West generally involuntary, often reflex, and are commonly confined to women. In the East they are deliberately encouraged, coaxed, enjoyed, and may be almost regarded as an art. Men as well as women indulge in hysteria as they do in charity, viz., for its own sake and irrespective of the worthiness or otherwise of the object. Give an Oriental an emotion, and he will revel in it, gloat over it, play with it. Tell an Indian school-boy at an enthusiastic prize-giving that it is the King-Emperor's birthday, or Empire Day, or the anniversary of Queen Victoria's coronation or death, and he will recite a fervent poem, and dance in accumulating frenzy till he almost drops exhausted to the floor. Take the same lad to a crowded nationalist meeting, inflame his political vanity with mythical stories of India's past greatness and present degradation under alien rule, and his susceptible nature will presently glow with all the heating fallacies leading to racial hatred. Then watch his sister parting for a few weeks from her mother (with whom she may be on quite indifferent terms), and you will witness an orgy of weeping and embracing by the ten minutes together. Collect a number of Pathans in a recruiting meeting and fire them with rhetoric about the greatness and goodness of Empire and the horror of the German menace, and they will draw in and savour

the militant atmosphere with every breath they take. Gather them together again as a committee to discuss a religious festival or facilities for the *Haj* (Pilgrimage to holy places), and you will shortly feel the air charged with fanatical zeal and scarcely suppressed passion. Scratch a Muhammadan and you find a fanatic ; scratch a fanatic and you find a savage. Facts are nothing, historical sense is nothing, danger is nothing, law is nothing. Religious intoxication has often led to outrage, assassination, rapine, rebellion, forcible conversion. Now come back to a quiet village where a poor Hindu woman is in labour, or has just lost her infant, perhaps a little girl whose sex originally made her arrival quite unwelcome. The neighbours know all about it ; they have discussed the expected event with gathering relish for weeks ; and now the poor mother's weeping will be drowned in a frenzy of alien wailings, some hired, others spontaneous. Or go to a farewell party where the notables of the district are entertaining a departing Collector. He has been strict and none too popular or accessible, and local taxation has gone up in his time. But enthusiasm is in the air, tempered with the excited sorrow of parting ; grievances are forgotten, the red carpet is down, refreshments circulate, fireworks splutter, everyone garlands everyone else, speeches and poems recite with passionate hyperbole the departing hero's unique virtues, and the new market will be called by his name, thereby perpetuating his memory for ever. A few days later the new Collector will be welcomed by the same crowd on the same red carpet ; while similar refreshments, fireworks, garlands, speeches and poems will celebrate (in anticipation) another unique ruler,—who at the same time is

requested to move the new market to another part of the town.

And such demonstrations, domestic, social, political or religious, are not hypocritical or insincere : they are genuinely and deeply felt at the time, even perhaps to the extent of a subscription list swollen by the generosity of emulation ; but they end with a sudden reaction, and the enthusiasts of yesterday relapse today into a stolid apathy, which invests extinct hysteria with an air of remote unreality, and treats the subscription list, when circulated by the treasurer, with obstinate disfavour and all the evasions of Oriental procrastination.

THE HYSTERICAL FATHER

A curious instance of Indian hysterics came into the writer's experience some years ago. There was a famine, and the Collector had sent one of his deputy collectors, an able and promising young officer, to reorganize some details of relief—a task involving considerable work and some strenuous touring. On his return to headquarters he was suddenly taken ill, and was reported to be dying. The Collector went in the afternoon to see and cheer up the poor fellow on his bed, and also asked the Doctor Babu, who was acting as Civil Surgeon, his opinion of the case. "Tetanus", was the reply, "and very serious." "But did the deputy sahib have an accident or cut himself and get blood-poisoning?" "No, it is atraumatic tetanus", answered the Doctor, with relish for the technical words and the unfamiliar disease. "Had the father been wired for?" was the next question. "Yes," was the reply; "but he could not arrive till ten or eleven that night."

Just before he went to bed, the Collector heard that the young man was dead. But there was nothing to be done that night, so he was soon asleep, having had as usual a long, varied and tiring day. On the other side of the house his small son, who was ailing, was fitfully sleeping with his nurse. About midnight the Collector uneasily awoke. There were noises and cries in the distance, as a number of men approaching from the direction of the city. He was soon wide awake, listening

to what sounded like a growing volume of voices raised in agitation. Nearer and nearer they came, and turned in at the gate not a hundred yards away. Thinking a crowd was coming to see him, perhaps to protest against some grievance supposed to be urgent, or perhaps refugees from some city riot, he hurried on his dressing-gown, (a precaution of which he was later very glad, as the nights of March are often cold in north India), stepped out through the "chick" covering the doorway to the edge of the wide verandah, and looked down the drive. No crowd was visible ; but half way down the garden he could see the police sentry ineffectually trying to keep back a figure, which was gesticulating, and pressing, shouting and screaming—a discord of wailings which seemed to cover every tone of the human voice, a noisy dirge ranging over the whole diapason of excited grief. There was no crowd ; no one else except a silent servant who hovered respectfully in the darkness behind. The whole of this uproar was the work of one old man, the father of the dead officer !

"I was rather touched," said the Collector, when he related this part of the story, "to think that this poor old man in the first sudden agony of his bereavement should leave his friends and rush to pour out his woes to me. I had never met him before. It was simply that he felt he must come with his trouble (as they so often do) to the head of the district. However, the noise had to be stopped, or there would be no more rest that night for my wife or child. So I made the sentry let the old man pass, and held up my hand for silence. He eased off a bit as we met, and I tried to condole with him quietly, telling him how highly I had thought of

his son. But the raving hysteria soon began again ; so I suddenly asked him :— ‘ How many sons have you, Pandit Ji ? ’ With an effort he braced up a little and said, ‘ Five more ’. ‘ Well,’ I said, ‘ I have only one, and he is sick and lying in that room over there ; so please speak quietly, or he will wake and get worse.’ Again he subsided, and I began to talk of arrangements for the morrow, hoping soon to be able to say good-night. You see, I couldn’t ask him into the house at that hour, or I should only encourage his lamentations, and I should never get rid of him. However, he had not unburdened himself yet, and began to get excited and noisy again ; so I had to think of something else to soothe him. Then I had an inspiration. I said, ‘ You mentioned five other sons, Pandit Ji : what are they all doing ? ’ This made him turn his thoughts to others and away from his own feelings. Two of his sons, he said, were clerks, one a soldier, and a fourth was looking after the family land, while the youngest was reading for his Matric, and hoped afterwards for a nomination as sub-inspector (Police). All were promising to do well, so I congratulated him, and said I was sure they would do him credit, and help to console him for his loss. ‘ Ah,’ he replied, ‘ but *this son here was the only one with a large pay.*’ Then I knew I had got him : he couldn’t go on raving if he was thinking of money ; hysterics couldn’t persist along with such a prosaic and worldly state of mind. And so it proved. He soon began quietly pleading with me for a nomination to the Police for his youngest son, and I said I would consider it later when he passed the Matric,—a promise which he did not let me forget later on, I can tell you. Finally he departed peacefully about two o’

clock, and I went to bed again dog-tired and shivering."

"It only shows", added the Collector looking at his watch, "how these people can work their emotions up, and deliberately play on them, crescendo, forte, fortissimo. I believe that old man positively enjoyed letting himself go and making a scene. In the bitterness of his mourning it appealed to his vanity and sense of importance to come here, and roll his lamentations over his tongue,—while his tongue rolled them over the whole compound. Childish we should call it, eh? But they like it. And I imagine that touch about his youngest son was at the back of his mind the whole time: he saw nothing incongruous in using and exaggerating his grief for one son in order to get a job for another: he thought it would strengthen his case by appealing violently to my sense of pity. Curious bit of psychology, wasn't it? —heigh ho! Time to dress now: the entire station is coming to dinner, to wit three men (including the canal engineer who is just in from camp) and actually one lady. She can't afford to go to the Hills this year, poor thing!"

THE BUTCHERS' STRIKE

Islampur had a population of 60,000, of whom over half—an unusually large proportion in north India—were Muhammadans and therefore meat-eaters. The numerous butchers' shops were dotted about the most congested parts of the crowded bazars, some huddled together beneath the great mosque, some interspersed with the shops and houses of Hindus, others flaunting red joints of beef in profane proximity to Brahman temples—shrines sacred to the cult of cow-worship. All the meat shops were airless, insanitary hovels, devoid of cleanly appliances, and screened from public gaze only by torn, transparent blinds of split bamboo which concealed nothing. Lumps of meat and entrails lay on the mud floor, and dirty rags of cloth gave only nominal protection against swarms of flies, which divided their buzzing attention between these and the neighbouring sweet stalls ; while crows and pariah dogs hovered about, pouncing on whatever fragments they could reach. There were rules and bye-laws of course, but they were difficult to enforce, since to the Muhammadan majority there was nothing offensive in all this, while the Hindu minority, yielding to apathy rather than repulsion, shrank from making a fuss and preferred to avert their eyes and nostrils. Many Magistrates and Civil Surgeons had proposed to remove this widespread nuisance, but Indian inertia was too strong for them ; they knew that drastic reforms were dangerous unless supported by

public opinion, and they were loth to touch even the fringe of that most thorny of all controversiës in India—the question of cow-killing; for while the Hindu venerates cows, it is on occasions the Muhammadan's religious duty to slaughter and eat them.

At last, when the file was two feet deep, the matter was seriously tackled by a combination of a strong Magistrate, (Robson by name) who was notorious for seeing things through, and a Civil Surgeon who was an enthusiast on hygiene. The latter received the blessing of the Sanitary Department of Government, while the former, being official Chairman of the Municipal Board, had little difficulty in getting the city fathers to register his decrees as formal resolutions. Several thousand Rupees were voted, an airy and convenient site was chosen and acquired, a hygienic project was framed and passed by proper authority, and soon a model meat market was constructed—a delight to the eyes of reforming zeal. Notices were issued, inviting objections to the forthcoming closing of the old shops and opening of the new; whereupon a few half-hearted grumbles were heard and over-ruled by the Board (or its Chairman), and an occasional deputation of discontented butchers was benevolently rebuked and lectured on the advantages of sanitary improvements. Confirmatory notices were then issued, fixing April 1st as the date on which the new era was to open, and bye-laws were published in the Gazette making it thereafter penal to sell meat in the old shops or anywhere in the town outside the new market. Licences for stalls (with all their conveniences and fixtures) were to be obtained in the municipal office, and clerks were deputed to deal with

the expected rush of applications. None were received ; but on the other hand no serious objections came in. Meantime Robson, having inaugurated his reform in all but physical fact, applied for hot weather leave and actually departed in the middle of April. His successor for the next seven months was young Hamilton, who was now to officiate for only the second time as a district Magistrate. No sooner had he taken charge than he learned that the new market was empty, the city was meatless, and a large deputation of butchers and their friends was waiting for him in the garden. He had heard all about the meat crisis from Robson and from the official file, and had decided that his senior's project must be carried through. Sympathy might be due to the butchers and their customers now being banished from the shops and habits of generations, and much tact would be required ; but these shops and habits were an outrage to the decency of the town, a menace to public health, and an offence to Hindu susceptibilities. The new model market had been approved by higher authorities, was a *fait accompli*, and its use could not co-exist with the old methods. After listening patiently to the deputation, which was orderly, persuasive and even ingratiating in demeanour, he explained that his predecessor's orders could not now be altered but must be strictly carried out. The butchers departed chattering quietly, disappointed but unconvinced. The fact is, their whole point of view was different. A European regards administration as a rule of law, permanent and continuous because based on principle : an Oriental regards it as an exercise of power, changeable and arbitrary because dependent on the personal caprice of

the ruler for the time being. There was nothing wrong with the old shops, they argued ; they had always been like that and were central and convenient. This new brick structure in a corner of the town was just a whim of a hot-headed ruler who liked to have his own way ; nobody minded *that* ; but also nobody wanted the market and certainly nobody intended to use it. They had not bothered to put in objections before ; for they would only have made the sahib angry, and that would be very uncomfortable ; it was much simpler to wait for the new ruler, who was young and was reputed to be simple and sympathetic in *mizâj* (temperament) ; *he* would not have this unintelligible craze for brick and plaster and hooks and screens and sloping slabs and masonry drains flushed with water ; and as for flies, *they* were everywhere in any case.

And so the long fight began, and neither party meant to yield ; on one side was an Englishman supported by his official staff and official machinery ; on the other were 35,000 Muhammadans, meatless but determined. The affair had begun to assume a religious aspect ; Maulvis were preaching against the market, and it was widely whispered that its construction was an insidious blow to that pious institution—the *sacrifice* of cows. This was an opportunity not to be missed by Hindus who valued that equally pious institution—the *worship* of cows ; so these enthusiasts went about taunting the Muhammadans with having lost the favour of the *Sarkar*, the prohibition of the old facilities being a subtle blow at the slaughter of kine. One day Hamilton received an anonymous letter alleging that Robson had taken Rs 30,000 to side with the Hindus and stop cow-sacrifice. This

letter went as a matter of course into the waste paper basket ; but these insinuations were so rife in the city, that Hamilton decided to give the lie to them by the official slaughter of cattle. So he induced the city fathers to sanction the employment of butchers as municipal servants : but as no local butcher, and indeed no self-respecting Muhammadan for a hundred miles round, would by this time go anywhere near either the slaughter-house or the meat market, he obtained through the police a couple of bad characters, who for double the usual pay and under promise of police protection consented to slaughter one or two cows a day and sell the joints in the market. These sufficed for the Eurasian population and native Christians in Railway lines, who, however, suffered considerably from the reduced facilities for some time to come. The municipal butchers received police escort, and once or twice when they were assaulted as blacklegs by local Muhammadans, the latter were promptly prosecuted and imprisoned. It might have been supposed that educated influential Muslims, many of whom when consulted in time past had approved of the meat-market in the much praised but little followed cause of sanitary reform, would have dissuaded their less-enlightened co-religionists from this foolish strike. But public opinion is embryonic in India ; and these leaders of society (some of whom were actually members of the Municipal Board) dared not risk the odium of seeming to be unorthodox and pro-Hindu. Whenever the young Magistrate saw these gentlemen, as he often did, each always protested that he alone of the local Muhammadans bought meat in the new market, but that he could not persuade the ignorant others to

do the same. Though they all made this claim, no such purchase was ever verified, and there was never a demand for more than two or three small cows daily.

Meantime, local meat-lovers were getting hungry as time passed, and, recognising that the game was now serious, they proceeded to make the usual moves. The Local Government was addressed with piteous and moving memorials alleging harsh treatment and official flouting of old institutions; barristers sought interviews with Secretaries in the Hills, maintaining that the new market was inconvenient, remote from residential quarters, difficult of access by poor women, even insanitary! Whereas the old shops had none of these defects, but were hallowed by immemorial and treasured custom. Verbose and heart-rending telegrams were even sent to Simla, and subscriptions were raised for the defence of religion in danger. The months were now passing, and the strain and conflict of several more months might have been spared to Islampur, if the higher authorities had at this point taken up a firm and uncompromising attitude. But, "*dis aliter visum*"; bureaucrats in the Hills have a thirst for information, and are impatient of a file which is not complete in every detail. They suffer, in fact, from too much, not too little, sense of responsibility—which is precisely the opposite of what is usually alleged against them. Now the principle of this new reform had long ago been accepted and could not now be questioned: the old shops were intolerable, the new market stood ready for use. But the memorialists had provided matter for enquiry by alleging that the latter was inconveniently remote from residents of distant parts of the town. So the Commissioner was

solemnly ordered by Government to investigate this matter, and he complied by intimating an early date for a descent upon Islampur,—not of course to re-open the question of the meat market (to admit that would be undiplomatic), but to inspect the district treasury ! This camouflage deceived nobody : everyone knew that the Commissioner was coming to enquire about the butchers' strike. The butchers took heart of grace, feeling that they had made a step towards victory, and resolved to hold out longer. Here was another authority, and an even higher one, whose heart might be moved to leniency, whose *mizâj* (temperament) was not arbitrarily set on this absurd white elephant, and who might permit the dear old shops to be re-opened. So more time passed, and the Commissioner came and went round the town, and departed and made his report to Government. The market, he had ascertained, was easily accessible for everyone, except for the European quarters and one area (called Khâlapâr) which was separated from the bulk of the town by a canal insufficiently equipped with bridges. The few Muhammadans who lived on that side would certainly have to walk a mile, or even two, to get to the market. After a dignified interval orders came down that since the market was remote from certain parts, the Municipal Board, in consultation with butchers and customers, should establish *branch markets* for the convenience of residents so isolated. So Hamilton spent two weary mornings tramping the streets and lanes under the fierce sun with the butchers ; while his agreeable companions, scenting triumph at last, interpreted " branch markets " in a sense favourable to their own conservatism. Solemnly

yet enthusiastically they conducted him to the forlorn sites of the dear old shops, sites all within easy reach of the new market itself, some surrounded by Hindu dwellings, one actually in a quarter inhabited by Jains—a sect which abhors the taking of life in any shape ! Patiently but firmly the Chairman of the Board negatived all these suggestions, insisting that the only quarter suitable for a “ branch market ” was Khâlapâr. Across the canal the butchers reluctantly followed him, but whenever he pointed out an airy spot suitable for the purpose no one concerned had a good word to say for it. Hamilton reported all this to Government ; but even now the factitious nature of the agitation was not realized in the Hills ; whence, after time for consideration, came the direction that since the butchers would not co-operate with the Board, the Magistrate should *himself* select suitable sites for “ branch markets ”. Compliance with this would have caused both embarrassment and an indefinite continuance of the strike, but for one circumstance, of which Hamilton was quick to take advantage. For five months now Europeans, Indian Christians and Eurasians, chiefly in Railway lines, had suffered discomfort ; for though in the new market one or two beef stalls were open officially, and a few low-caste Hindus had also been induced to sell mutton, yet shopping facilities were not great, choice of joints was limited, and fetching meat was not unattended by personal risk. At this juncture a high railway official introduced and vouched for a nondescript Englishman who had, for reasons not to be too carefully scrutinized, lost his job on the railway. Hamilton saw this man, and gave him a contract to run

up a temporary building in Railway lines, and to sell meat therein : but it was clearly though quietly understood that there was to be no selling to Muhammadans from the city. This arrangement worked well, and Hamilton was contemplating a similar one in Civil lines, (so that he would always be able to point to these shops in case he were ever asked about his " branch markets "), when the strike broke. Its collapse, though sudden, was the culmination to a long series of events and manoeuvres, the most potent causes being the exhaustion of funds and the desire for meat. Subscriptions had, of course, been raised by pious Muhammadans ; but deputations, memorials, telegrams and legal advisers cost money, and so did the defence of prosecutions and the heavy fines which always followed smuggling when proved. For the strikers did not confine their efforts to higher official spheres ; slaughtering was started in neighbouring villages, and carcasses were smuggled in. To check this Muhammadan police were useless, while orthodox Hindus laboured under the suspicion of being over-zealous. Sikh policemen, however, could be better trusted to be impartial, and these for the most part were posted at the entrances to the town. Import for private consumption was legal, but import for sale was punishable ; and when whole cartloads of meat were brought in for a single purchaser, whose only explanation was that he had a party of friends, the Courts naturally inferred that the real object was sale, and inflicted heavy fines by summary trial. Slaughter in private houses was also illegal, and the excuse that a wedding-feast was a religious ceremony did not commend itself to the Magistrate or his loyal assistants. A few judicious hints

to the chief Maulvis made them modify their references to the market in their Friday sermons ; and indeed it was difficult to keep up the pretence that cow-killing was in danger, when it was officially carried out every day. The Muhammadan magnates of the city, too, began slowly to see that they had been backing the wrong horse ; for the Magistrate's politeness to them was getting more chilly at every interview, and it would never suit their sense of importance to lose official favour without becoming popular heroes.

Worst of all, the novelty had worn off, subscription funds were exhausted and were not being renewed, butchers were losing the profits of their trade, and consumers, hungry for meat and expecting to be hungrier still if they held out till the cold weather, alienated their sympathies and began to ask what all the pother was about after all.

Whatever the immediate cause, the end came suddenly. A day dawned when the municipal office was besieged by a long queue of butchers asking for licences ; and the new market was soon full of sellers and buyers, doing business as if nothing had happened.

The strike was broken ; and when Robson returned a month later, there were no indications of the struggle which had lasted over six months, except that one butcher filed a humble application in Hamilton's court, praying that he be given a certificate for having been the first to apply for a licence for the new meat-market !

.

Next hot weather Hamilton took furlough ; and a couple of years later he casually met in another district one of the chief Muhammadan lawyers of Islampur.

He asked after the market. "What market?" was the reply. "The meat-market opened in my time; is it going on all right?" "Yes", he answered, indifferent and surprised at the unimportance of the topic; "it's going on all right; why shouldn't it?"

So short are human memories!

THE HONOUR OF CASTE

Caste in India is sometimes railed against by missionaries and reformers : but although this institution is perhaps unchristian and is certainly undemocratic, it supplies a structure of society and a system of motives for action, for which no hopeful alternative has yet been suggested. Caste is a valuable substitute for a poor law, it attaches stringent sanctions to its moral rules, and it has a remarkable code of honour. It is in some sort a trade or family guild, which gives to an injured individual the corporate support of all its hereditary members.

A certain village in north India was ruled with a rod of iron by its sole proprietor, a rich Muhammadan of rapacious instincts and sensual tastes, who lived in a fine house in the village. His tenants included a colony of low-caste Hindus, who were rack-rented and oppressed with arbitrary exactions and forced labour. This they patiently endured ; but all castes, however humble, have their *amour propre* and their standard of self-respect, and these were outraged when their Muhammadan landlord seduced the young wife of one of them, and openly kept her as his mistress in his house. The brotherhood assembled secretly in full strength, and feeling that on such a matter the honour of one was the honour of all, deliberated as to how they should purge themselves of the scandal. Merely to bring the erring wife back would be useless : as the husband said, and

all agreed, she would now be "of no use" to him. She must in fact suffer with her paramour ; else the aggrieved husband would be permanently out-casted, ostracised from the fellowship of tobacco and water, banned into isolation. For smaller offences it would have sufficed for him to redeem his position by paying a *dand* or cash fine, to be spent on a feast for the whole fraternity and perhaps some beggars and Brahmans : but this disgrace had gone too far for mild measures.

So they made their plans ; and one dark night all the able-bodied of the caste, armed with *lathis* (long, brass-bound staves), crept to the big house. Hastily smashing in the door, they rushed in, found the two together, dragged the trembling woman from the bed through the doorway outside the house, and clubbed the life out of her with a few passionate blows. Leaving the body there, alone under the stars, they hurried to join the pursuit of her paramour, who panic-stricken was stumbling up the steep flight of narrow stairs leading from the courtyard to the roof. Then began a frenzied chase which would have made the fortune of a cinema-operator. Scurrying over flat or sloping roofs, leaping alley-ways on to dimly-seen walls, stooping under low porticoes, plunging down crazy staircases where bricks and mud were dislodged at every step, panting along lanes, crouching in shadows, tripping over rubbish-heaps, the proud Muhammadan raced for his life from the humble tenants whom he had so long despised, oppressed and now disgraced. Round the village, on ground and roof, they followed him, frantic for vengeance, screaming for blood. At last as he returned to his own doorway, exhausted but hoping for help from his servants, he

stumbled against an unaccustomed obstacle. It was the woman's body. In a moment they were upon him, in a minute his every bone was broken, in two minutes his figure was unrecognisable pulp.

The Hindus went home, and sent word to the police, giving no names. By sunrise the sub-inspector was gazing at the two bodies lying there side by side before the doorway. No one ran away. The whole village stood watching silently, till the woman's husband quietly gave himself up. He said he had committed both murders by himself, to avenge his honour ; and no one had helped him ! He produced his blood-stained *lathi*, and held out his wrists for the hand-cuffs.

It was, of course, obvious that many men had been concerned in these murders ; there were marks of countless feet, of innumerable blows ; and it was physically impossible for this puny, ill-fed creature to have mastered and killed with such frightful injuries a powerful, well-nourished Muhammadan. The authorities guessed pretty shrewdly that most, if not all, of the men of that caste were guilty ; but all the other *lathis*, bodies and stained clothes had already been washed or hidden, and everyone in the village professed complete ignorance of the night's events. The suspected caste-men said that they lived in a remote corner of the village (which was true), and that they had spent the whole night in bed (which was untrue) ; the murdered man's Muhammadan servants had heard an alarm and a scuffle, had dimly seen an angry mob, and had vanished in panic ; the other villagers had been wakened by yellings and chasings, but, peeping out, had caught only dark glimpses of vague, unrecognisable figures. All of these

people knew well enough who had done the deed, and most of them sympathised ; it was a natural and proper murder, and had doubtless been committed by the natural and proper persons, viz., the class whose business it was, whose honour had been besmirched. It would have been imprudent to interfere or look too closely at the time ; and it would be odious now to give evidence to the *Sarkar*, unless one happened to be a friend of the dead man,—which no one was, as he had been an abominable tyrant, and thoroughly deserved the punishment now brought upon him by fate.

And all this time the poor husband went on patiently repeating that he alone had done the deed, alone by himself, alone with his own *lathi*, to avenge his honour. And to this story he clung, both before the Magistrate and before the Judge. In the eyes of the village, his conduct throughout was creditable and correct according to the code of caste : it was the only right way out of the disgrace which had fallen to his lot ; it was meritorious and on the whole rather fine.—And who shall say it was *not* fine ? Was there not a touch of the heroic in this,—that a humble serf should, for the sake of a woman, suppress his natural timidity, face the tyrant in his stronghold, redeem his good name by honourable violence, and then, shielding his friends but excusing nothing for himself, go willingly to his death ? We of the West punish calculated murder with the scaffold ; we execrate lying and say that truthfulness in court is a public duty. Our law advises an injured husband to file a case for adultery (a criminal offence in India), and smugly prohibits the seeking of redress by personal violence. But to an Indian villager all this means nothing.

What ? Is he to drag the shame of his hearth before the public gaze ? Submit his broken heart to the sneering cross-examination of pleaders and the cynical amusement of the ne'er-do-wells who haunt the Cutcherry ? Watch his painful prosecution break down before the venal evidence of his wife's rich seducer ? and even if he wins his case, console himself with some fine inflicted on his adversary, and a petty share of it awarded to himself as compensation ? And if his erring wife is returned to him by the Court, of what use is this ? Will it restore his self-respect and position among his fellows to see her at home again, a weeping reminder of a wound that cannot be healed, a faithless witness to his perpetual infamy ? Better death, far better !

When the murder trial came into court, there was only one accused : against the others there was no evidence. Perhaps no clearer case for conviction had ever come before the Judge ; never perhaps had he passed sentence more reluctantly ; never perhaps did any murderer walk to the scaffold more willingly !

THE MAD RANI

The Raja of Krishnapur was a high-caste Rajput, and, though not an independent prince, was a magnate with exceptional privileges, paying a small permanent quit-rent to the British Government instead of land-revenue open to periodical revision, and having his own police, excise system, and the right to keep up—or rather neglect—the records and maps of his own territory. He was also an honorary magistrate, though very few cases were actually tried by him, and his jurisdiction as such covered the whole of his estate, with the exception of the village of Nurpur. The significance of the exclusion of this particular little area will shortly be made clear.

When he was a young man, the Raja had married a Rajput lady of suitable birth and dignity ; and she had accordingly come to live with him in his imposing and fortified palace overlooking the lowlands of the Jumna. The union was not happy, however ; for the temperaments of both were difficult and wayward, and—worst offence of all to a Hindu potentate—the Rani failed to produce an heir to the estate. As time went on the discontented lady spent longer and longer intervals away from the palace, paying visits to her own people and sometimes to others. When the marriage was about five years old, it was suddenly whispered that the Rani was *enceinte* ; but the fluttering joy which this expectation should naturally have aroused was

damped by the peculiar behaviour of the Raja. He flew into a passion, and banished his wife to the fort of Nurpur, a lonely exile which continued for the next twenty-five years, and was varied only by the Rani's periodical journeys to see her own friends, and by the occasional visits of the Raja to the fort—visits which grew rarer and rarer. At Nurpur a son was duly born ; but the Raja would have nothing to do with the child, and sulkily denounced him as no son of his, and no heir to the estate. Later on, to the surprise of all and the diversion of the *quidnuncs*, there was born a second son, whom the Raja again disowned. It was perhaps fortunate that both these children perished in infancy ; and their deaths may be presumed to have been natural, though the immediate causes were soon lost in obscurity. But embarrassment and curiosity were again aroused when the Rani gave birth to yet a third son, who survived to manhood and was generally known as the *Kunwar Sahib*. His paternity was angrily and consistently denied by the Raja, and remained buried in mystery. The delicacy of the situation was felt by the various Collectors who from time to time took charge of the district ; and some of them made discreet enquires and recorded confidential opinions. The difficulty was not immediate while the Raja lived, but might become acute after his death ; since the estate was an important one, and succession to the *gaddi* would require the formal recognition of the Government. Officially and according to his own statement and behaviour, the Raja was heirless ; but on the other hand the Rani was understood to claim the reversion for her son, and she was certainly bringing him up to believe in his own

right to succeed—a belief which was fostered by the flatterers who surrounded him.

Meanwhile the Raja was becoming more and more alienated from his wife. At first he had allowed her a proper income and staff of servants at Nurpur; but when son after son was born, he vindictively diminished her comforts and allowances; and as the *Kunwar Sahib* grew up and the Rani attempted to establish her own and her son's claims with the authorities, his bitterness increased and he reduced his wife almost to penury and solitary imprisonment.

When Robins took charge as Collector of the district, and was looking into magisterial and police matters, he was struck by two curious details: one was the peculiar exclusion of Nurpur from the Raja's nominal jurisdiction as magistrate; the other was the constant posting and relieving of a small police guard for the Rani at Nurpur. Perusal of previous papers and a few quiet enquiries told him a good deal; but he was not fully enlightened till he toured through the Krishnapur estate and pitched his camp in a grove between the palace and the fort. He then received a long, rambling letter from the Rani begging him to go and see her, and bitterly complaining of indignities, confinement and impoverishment at the hands of the Raja. It was now easy to see why the lady's place of residence had been removed from the jurisdiction of her hostile husband; and as for the police guard, it was paid for by the Raja and might be regarded indifferently as the body-guard of his wife or as her jailors. When Robins rode over to the fort, it hardly needed the protests of the head-constable to show him why service in that desolate spot

was unpopular, and why the guard had to be changed every three months to relieve the indisciplin  of *ennui*. The village was remote, small, and devoid of shops and amenities of every kind. The rambling old fort, once a pretentious mansion, was now forlorn and dilapidated ; the walls were breached and crumbling ; the moat was rank with noisome weeds, the courtyard a death-trap of holes surrounded by leaky and scarcely habitable outhouses. The stables were empty save for one anaemic cow, which was all the livestock now possessed by this daughter of a prince. Lizards and bats haunted the dismal windings of the approach drive, and pigeons had made their homes in the great towers, beneath which creaky rusty gates hung dejected and permanently ajar. There were no servants ; no one would stay for more than a few days with this fierce, eccentric old woman, who was always expecting the police guard to purchase for her not only food, but also opium and the still more deadly hemp drugs. Long ago the poor creature had sought in intoxicants relief for her lonely sorrows, balm for her wounded pride ; and latterly the greater part of her pittance was squandered on these maddening indulgences. No one ever came to see her now, except her son, who had timed one of his brief occasional visits to synchronize with that of the Collector. They met in the shabby court-yard. The Kunwar Sahib was now nearly twenty, a well-grown and intelligent lad but poorly educated and brought up to no profession. It was pathetic to see the aimless dejection of this young man, cursed with dubious paternity, trained in vanity, caprice and idleness, vaguely hoping for a destiny which could never be fulfilled. He could not stand much of

his mother's society, he said ; her moods varied from frenzy to gloom, according as those potent drugs had their effect in excitement or anodyne ; her temper was violent, her language abusive, her ambitions extravagant, her complaints incessant, her taunts unendurable. Leaving the young man to his wistful brooding, Robins passed up slowly and alone to the inner door, and gave a knock which echoed hollow among the vacancies within. The clatter of loose slippers sounded along a stone corridor, and drew near ; there was a clank of chains and locks, and the Rani opened the door. Feverishly shutting it again after Robins had entered, she led him, mumbling and chattering as she went, through long passages, deserted rooms and half-ruined balconies, to her living apartment in the *zanana*. This was only an open verandah, separated by a heavy frayed curtain from what must have been a bedroom and kitchen behind. There was hardly any furniture, except a rickety plush chair and a dirty rug. On the former the Rani invited Robins to sit ; on the latter, after presenting a little rice and a couple of cardamums with a faded reminiscence of the grand manner, she squatted herself. Her clothing, of fine silks, was torn and threadbare ; and her *chaddar* hung carelessly from her head, revealing her yellow face, her sunken neck, almost her bosom. Her eyes glaring, her teeth discoloured, her hair dishevelled, the poor demented lady, who in times past would not have shown her little finger to a man outside her family, poured out her woes. Her money and jewels, she raved, had been stolen, her fire-arms looted, her treasures rifled ; plotters in the palace had alienated the Raja and banished herself ;

her allowances had been intercepted, her servants seduced away, her good name besmirched ; even now there was an intrigue to get the Raja to marry again, to secure another heir, to disinherit her son. Robins out of this unceasing flow of invective could elicit no proofs, nothing tangible ; but the mention of her son gave him a lead to the main point for enquiry. *Was* he in truth the Raja's son ? She glared wildly at the Collector, and creeping mysteriously till she touched his knees, she muttered in an eerie whisper, " He is not even *my* son ! " This astonishing statement made Robins think she was clean out of her senses ; but he kept quiet, and coolly cross-examined her. Did she really mean the *Kunwar Sahib* was not born of her own body ? Yes, she answered more composedly, not of her own body at all. Then who were the parents ? But she would not say ; she began raving again of her grievances. To quiet her, Robins suggested a stroll round the house. So these two went together, the man and the demented woman, through spacious apartments, pleasure-halls and points of vantage—all now abandoned and decayed. Still chattering but quieter now, she led him back to her living room ; and when they were seated again, he repeated his question about the *Kunwar Sahib*. Twice again she answered " Not of her own body at all ", but more she would not say.

Suddenly from behind the curtain came a strange soft voice—a young woman's voice. The Rani sharply answered, and it was not heard again. But who could this girl be, hidden there ? What could be her parentage ? What her strange past ? What her present drudgery ? What her luckless future ? Was she slave or relative

or illegitimate child? The Rani would say nothing, and presently Robins left the fort, reflecting on the unnameable mysteries which sometimes go on behind the impenetrable *parda* of Indian palaces.

.

It was nearly two years before Robins saw the Rani again, and in the meantime much had happened. In the first place the Raja, as his wife had hinted, had married again; still more important, the young Rani had given birth to a son, who had been not only openly acknowledged by the Raja, but formally recognised by the Government as heir to the estate. It was indeed to take part in the official celebration of this event that the Collector had come to Krishnapur. A circumstance which gave Robins quite as much satisfaction was that the *Kunwar Sahib* had induced a respectable family to ignore or condone his bar sinister, had married a suitable girl with a little property, and had settled down on his wife's land, abandoning (for ever it is to be hoped), his old dreams and vain ambitions. The Rani of Nurpur again pressed Robins to go to see her, and he complied—not without grave forebodings. His visit this time was brief. The Rani again met him at the door, but did not ask him inside. She was haggard, emaciated, hollow-eyed, unkempt, but fierce and indomitable as ever; she had evidently been indulging deeply in drugs, and her poor frame quivered with passionate shrieks. Hysterically she raved—a medley of wild vituperation. The Raja was an impotent dupe, his young Rani a scheming upstart, the new-born infant a supposititious changeling; let the young wife be medically examined to prove that she was no mother;

the Government was deceived, time-serving, faithless. Sobbing, glowering and tottering, she slammed the door in the Collector's face.

In a month she was dead, a victim to sorrow and drugs. The owner of the feminine voice behind the *parda* was never heard of again. Perhaps she too was a victim to "the drowsy syrups of the East."

THE RELUCTANT ADOPTION

The Thakurs have a proud place in the Hindu theocracy. Warriors, landed proprietors and stout yeoman-farmers, they claim kinship with princes, ruling chiefs, and *rajas*. Beninagar estate was in British India, but enjoyed an immemorial dignity and a semi-independent status which made it the cynosure of all the Thakur clans of the country-side. The present *Rao Sahib* was a courteous genial old gentleman, but his indebtedness was chronic and his matrimonial relations were peculiar. Insolvency mattered little to public opinion so long as the position and integrity of the *raj* were maintained ; nor were moral irregularities revolting. What wounded Thakur conservatism was the *Rao Sahib's* neglect of present appearances and of future continuity. His *Rani* was childless, and many years ago had abandoned the palace and gone to live with her own people. The *Rao Sahib* did not seem to feel the absence either of his wife or of an heir, but lived openly and comfortably with a low-caste mistress, by whom he had a son—now a strapping lad. He was faithful to this irregular family, and had settled one of his richest villages on the boy, of whom he was very fond ; but in law and fact the estate was heirless ; and the anomalous situation could no more be accepted by the Government than it was by the Thakur fraternity. Officially the Collector observed the proprieties by declining to offer a chair to the youth, when father and son came together to call ; for to sit

on a chair in the presence of a ruler is a symbol of dignity and respectability in India.

Hill, who was at this time Collector, was frequently asking the *Rao Sahib* how the *Rani* was, and when she was coming back to Beninagar. The reply was always the same ; her health just now was poor, but she was coming for a long visit in a few months. But she never came. Another delicate point which had constantly to be suggested was the succession to the estate : did not the *Rao Sahib* intend to adopt a son ? This was expected of him by the whole Thakur community, and would put the future succession on a correct footing : there was a very suitable youth, Mahabir Singh, in Jaspur—the village which had often in times past supplied adopted heirs to the Raj.

Does this proposal sound fantastical ? It was normal enough in India, where in default of natural sonship adoption is just as valid, and where it is so common for a *Raja* to have no legitimate offspring, that in some estates a custom has grown up whereby a specified village is expected to keep a supply of adoptable sons, in case of need by the ruling family. At any rate, the *Rao Sahib* of Beninagar took the suggestion composedly, considered Mahabir Singh eligible, and promised to take steps in the matter. But nothing was done, the fact being that the *Rao Sahib* was indolent, perfectly content with things as they were, devoted to his natural son, and averse to the introduction of novelties and complications into his *menage*. So Hill had to keep him up to the mark by constant reminders on this embarrassing subject ; and many interviews and visits passed between the two, besides florid letters on parchment, couched

in magniloquent Persian, wrapped in gaudy silk bags, and borne by clattering horsemen. At last the *Rao Sahib* assured Hill that his wife was really coming to Beninagar in the forthcoming autumn, and he undertook to arrange for the adoption of Mahabir Singh at the same time. This was satisfactory : for the *Rani* would have her part to play in the ceremony of " taking into the lap ". But Hill wanted to pin the *Rao Sahib* down to a date, which could only be done after consultation with *pandits* and astrologers. When these learned but dilatory authorities had made up their minds as to the auspices of the occasion, a date was firmly fixed, and ceremonious invitations went out to all the Thakurs of position in the neighbourhood. Hill himself also intimated his desire to be present, and arranged his tour accordingly. He did this partly out of compliment to the *Rao Sahib*, partly to satisfy himself that the adoption was delayed by no more procrastinations, partly also to make sure that the ceremony was completely formal and irrevocable, and so obviate the possibility of future dispute. For there are few issues more fruitful of litigation in India than adoption, the validity of which is constantly discussed in the courts. In order to rescue such cases from obscurity and doubt academic reformers, with more knowledge of law and town life than of primitive custom and the countryside, have sometimes suggested that adoption should be ratified by registered deed. To force such a regulation upon a devout Hindu would be about as reasonable as to expect a Roman Catholic to celebrate his marriage in a registration office. For Indian adoption is not a mere legal fiction—a device to ensure succes-

sion ; it is a sacrament, a religious observance, a mystic fact ; it even facilitates an heirless father's eternal salvation, which would be endangered if there were no son to perform his funeral ceremonies. When Hill with his full entourage went to Beninagar, he took with him one of his assistants, a high Brahman by caste ; partly in order to have access to expert advice on these esoteric rites, partly to add stateliness to the whole affair. They were met on the borders of the estate by the *Rao Sahib* and his body-guard, and the whole party proceeded on elephants and horses to the palace, where the enormous key of the fortress and a tray of jingling sovereigns were presented to the Collector, who touched and remitted them, while garlands were hung round the necks of all the visitors. All was in readiness ; the elders of the Thakur clans were present as well as Mahabir Singh ; the *Rani* had arrived and was in the *zanana*. In the centre of the great hall Hill and the *Rao Sahib* sat in golden chairs beneath a huge chandelier, while the Thakurs, in picturesque clothing, towering turbans and sashes stuck about with jewelled daggers, squatted round in a wide circle on skins of antelope, wolf and tiger. The Darbar opened, and Mahabir Singh came in—an open-faced, well-grown lad, educated as much as a Thakur cares to be. He approached and did obeisance to his adoptive father. Swords were presented, hilts touched, knees hugged, feet saluted, faces caressed, a few words exchanged, and it was over. The youth now went into the *zanana*, where the *Rani* went through similar solemnities, witnessed by Hill's assistant, who as a Brahman was admitted behind the *parda* for the ceremony. Returning to the main hall, where all the

Thakur elders still sat round in solemn but approving silence, Mahabir Singh made obeisance again to the *Rao Sahib*, whose son and heir he had now become, and whose house henceforward he proceeded to inhabit, his connection with his own family being now severed.

Satisfied with the ceremony he had witnessed, Hill, after the usual formalities of leave-taking, went back to his tent, where he spent several hours interviewing the Thakur clansmen. Stately, but in happy mood, they told him of their own affairs, and congratulated him and themselves on the restoration of the line of their feudal chief. Many used the same metaphor, drawn from the trees that they loved : " Ah ! " they beamed, " now the *gaddi* is green again ! "

And green it had need to be. For the old stem was withering, and within a year the adoptive father was dead. Unquestioned, unopposed, young Mahabir Singh was installed as the new *Rao Sahib*, and, acclaimed by the grey-beards, took his place as hereditary leader of their clan.

THE 6 DOWN EXPRESS

For the travelling public there are three sorts of trains in India. The mail makes a journey of many hundreds of miles, stops only at important stations, and is composed of long, stately, bogie coaches, mostly first or second class : the express travels nearly as fast, but halts rather oftener and includes rather more third and intermediate carriages : the passenger is slow, stops every few miles, and consists mostly of third class coaches, with very little first and second class accommodation—and that antiquated, uncomfortable and poorly equipped.

Hafizabad was a small station with only one platform, but on the main line and important enough for expresses to stop at. On this part of the system there was a single line only, but it was doubled for crossing purposes at the station, a loop curving round to the platform, while the main line ran along straight. The points, however, were not interlocked with the signals, so that the former had to be set by a separate operation from the latter—a dangerous and now nearly obsolete method. It was usual for number six down-country express to cross fifteen up passenger at Hafizabad in the forenoon ; and at eleven o'clock one drowsy morning the former was signalled with line clear ; so the stationmaster sent the senior pointsman or *jamadar*, Chandan Singh by name, to the up switch, to set the points for the loop or station line, and to bring in the express as usual ; after

which the up passenger, already waiting at the next station down, would be given line clear by wire, and allowed to proceed to Hafizabad. With points and signals duly set and the *jamadar* to receive her, the express glided in majestically and came to rest at the station line,—a long, heavy train with engine standing well in advance of the end of the platform. The station-master then telegraphed to release the up passenger, and sent one Dori to the down points, with orders to see that they were set so as to bring the train in on the straight or outside line. Dori was a consumptive, tired-looking individual, who had been transferred from a busier station, as being unequal to hard work, and had been at Hafizabad for only three or four days. He slouched dreamily along the line, found the switch already set for straight, and was puzzled. The fact is, the normal position of the points was for the main line, and there was nothing for Dori to do except receive the train by waving his flag. But he felt that he was there to make some change or other, and flurried with the idea that if he did not act the approaching train would somehow go wrong, he lost his head and suddenly—switched the points over for the loop ! Presently the passenger thundered past, took the curve to the right, and dashed into the standing express at fifteen miles an hour. The engine-driver was not to blame ; for both the distant and station signals were at safety, and he knew nothing of the impending accident, till he felt his engine swerving to the loop, when it was too late to do more than somewhat check his speed with the brakes. But why were the signals down ? As they were controlled from the station independently of the

points, it was of course the stationmaster's duty to satisfy himself that the latter were at straight, before he admitted the train by lowering the signal. To facilitate this, there was an indicating disc at the points, which pivoted as the switch was pulled, showing white for main line and black for loop. The stationmaster must have had the signals lowered without troubling to observe the disc ; and the result was a collision, disastrous though not tremendous. In the incoming train the engine-driver and fireman were thrown off and badly injured, and several passengers were hurt. Of the express the front portion telescoped, and ten lives were lost, besides many cuts and bruises and much damage to property.

After the usual joint-departmental enquiry the stationmaster and Dori were prosecuted for negligence leading to loss of life. The former, being in a lucrative position and of high caste, had many sympathisers and was defended by an expensive High Court pleader : the efforts of all were directed to prove that the stationmaster had seen the disc at white from the platform before he admitted the train, and that the whole blame lay on Dori. This unfortunate pointsman, being of low caste, a stranger and poor, had no one to help him in court ; so, (as often happens in such cases) the Magistrate had himself to defend him and ask questions on his behalf. After one or two hearings, the Magistrate came to the spot by trolley to investigate. He found everything as described above : the indicating disc was in order, and was perfectly visible from the station, unless—. Ah ! there was a point : he waited till the next down train drew up, and then looked for the indicator.

It was out of sight, hidden from the whole platform by the train standing on the loop ! At the next hearing of the case, the stationmaster, seeing his mistake, modified his statement. It was true he could not see the disc from outside his office ; but he had entered the standing train, crossed it, put his head out, and thus seen that the points were for the main line. This ingenious explanation was so unconvincing that few in court could resist a smile. Knowing Indian stationmasters as they did, they felt the ridiculousness of the picture of this stout, leisurely official rushing through a crowded third class carriage and stumbling across bundles and bodies squatting and recumbent to poke his head out on the off side and stare down the line,—and doing this not once only, but almost every day ! The suggestion was too hollow to get any serious support in evidence. Moreover the driver of the passenger engine, after seeing his signals down, had kept his eyes on Dori, who had made no pulling or pushing movement as the train approached ; so that the points and disc must have been altered for the loop before the signals were set to safety. It was quite clear that the stationmaster had never looked at the disc at all. As usual, he had given clear instructions to the pointsman, had assumed in him the obedience and commonsense of routine, and had admitted the train.

But there was another point. Why, asked the Magistrate, had Chandan Singh, the experienced *jamadar*, been sent to receive the first train, and Dori, a dolt and a newcomer, to the second ? The answer to this was obvious and unhesitating. Because the express was more *important* than the passenger. This explanation,

unlike the other, caused no surprise or amusement in court, except perhaps to the Magistrate. It was surely self-evident that the great express, with its fast timing, massive engine, imposing bogies and senior driver and guard, was intrinsically more important than the slow passenger with its old rolling-stock and low-paid staff ; and of course the bigger man was naturally sent to receive the bigger train. It did not seem to occur to any Indian in court that the work of bringing in the earlier train was less responsible and important than that of the later, since with two lines empty it did not really matter a straw on which line the express came in, whereas with one line occupied it was a matter of life or death to bring in the passenger on the other ! Thus does western logic differ from oriental.

.

The Magistrate had little difficulty in finding both men guilty of criminal negligence ; but the question of sentences was, as so often, the most perplexing part of the trial. On the one hand the public safety must be protected ; on the other both the stationmaster and the pointsman would lose their places on the railway, —the former a post of power and dignity, the latter one of poverty and drudgery. Finally, in a long and elaborate judgement, the Magistrate sentenced the former to four months imprisonment and the latter to nine. Dori never appealed : the poor fellow was probably more comfortable in jail than he had ever been in his life ; at any rate he spent the whole time in hospital and died in a few months. But the stationmaster's sentence aroused differences of opinion, depending on the point of view. When the Magistrate, weary with a long after-

noon with his judgement, lay down and asked his wife to read it out to him, she did so and at the end asked in surprise "Do you mean to say you have written all that, and only given him four months?" Later the Commissioner, to whom the case had been reported for the information of the Government and of the railway authorities, paid a visit of inspection, and expressed the opinion from the executive point of view that the stationmaster had got off very lightly. Meantime, however, that worthy had appealed both to the Judge and to the High Court; and in due course, the former, while upholding the conviction, cut the sentence down to two months, and the latter still further reduced it to six weeks. "*Quot homines, tot sententiae.*"

THE PLAGUE RIOTS

It is curious to reflect that in the India of to-day resistance to authority is associated with a too eager absorption of western ideas, whereas in times past it was prompted by dislike of novelty and suspiciousness of European notions of reform. The reason perhaps is that the exotic stimulants now being swallowed but imperfectly assimilated are mostly political ; and political theories appeal both to the Indian's vanity and to his love of the abstract. But barely a quarter of a century ago the new proposals were mostly practical, social, or hygienic, and these seemed to threaten the domestic peace and comfortable slovenliness which was so dear to the Indian.

The plague regulations were three years old before the prosperous industrial city of Debiganj rose in revolt against them. They sounded very nice in the abstract, thought the city fathers who had adopted them, and the influential residents who had raised no objection to them ; and no doubt they were quite suitable for other towns which had the misfortune to be visited by plague : Debiganj was not likely to be infected, so why bother to inform the ignorant, or talk about uncomfortable things like quarantine and disinfection ?

But plague *did* come to Debiganj, and there were half a dozen deaths in rapid succession. The authorities, realising that it would never do to permit the infection to spread in, and perhaps from, this large

commercial centre, erected a thatched hospital with segregation huts in an open suburb, and to this airy refuge all infected or suspected cases were ordered to be promptly removed. To the unenlightened populace these precautions seemed unintelligible, unnecessary and obnoxious. Why, they asked, should unoffending people, simply because they were sick, be dragged from their families to die, unpitied and unpetted, in a remote jungle ? This plague, with its fever and buboes, was no new thing ; the grey-beards had heard of it before, and the *baid*s and *hakîms* (native physicians) knew all about it. It was called *taîn*, and was uncomfortable enough ; but the officials (and especially the Doctor Sahib) had greatly added to its terrors by translating the word so as to include compulsory segregation. Nobody particularly resented a sickness sent by fate ; nobody even minded dying, if such was the will of *Allah* or *Parmeshwar*. But this spiriting of poor sick creatures away, never to be seen again, was intolerable : it looked like a device of the *sarkar* to reduce the population : were there not already rumours of a numbering of the people next year ? Besides, in that plague camp it was unlikely that *parda* or death ceremonies could be properly observed, and sinister sprinklings and fumigatings went on there. Some even whispered that patients were burnt, or otherwise got rid of ; while others hinted that the filtered water-supply of the city was being poisoned ! Thus misapprehension deepened into suspicion, and suspicion into panic, with a rapidity possible only in the bazars of the East. Nor were there wanting, to fan the flame, influential men who had personal grievances against the local administra-

tion. The fact is that municipal affairs had been in a scandalous state, until the present Magistrate had recently taken over the Chairmanship, and initiated some much-needed reforms. Nepotists now saw their nephews ejected from comfortable sinecures ; the constructors of the channel bringing water from the river disliked being penalized for defective work ; the filthy condition of the town had necessitated the transfer of a contract for street-cleaning, to the great disturbance of certain family interests ; meat and leather magnates were finding their monopolies less lucrative than before. And so meetings were convened, shops were closed by persuasion or intimidation, caste prejudices were astutely played upon, and even religion was found to be in danger, since questions of *parda* and the disposal of the dead were involved. The opportunity of the recurrence of an annual Muhammadan festival was seized by the wirepullers, who assembled some thousands of both creeds in the great place of worship, and caused suitable addresses to be given. Forgetting their mutual and radical disagreements, Hindu and Muslim crowds united to face the common danger, eagerly allowed their passions to be aroused, and, when they began to disperse after their religious exercises, were ready for anything—they knew not what. At this psychological moment a cry was raised in the city that a mother and child were actually now being taken away to the plague camp, to be burnt alive. This alarm was preconcerted and false, but it was feverishly passed from mouth to mouth, not without the assistance of certain gangs of rowdies, who had also been pre-arranged and who now proceeded to reinforce the streams of worshippers from

the mosque. In thousands they poured through the streets, and hurried to the hospital huts. Here they found no mother or child ; indeed there were hardly any inmates at all. But what matter ? The huts themselves stood there, provocative and menacing ; obviously these must be burnt. And burnt they were. There were also several policemen, guardians and representatives of this hateful institution ; even those out of uniform could be recognised by their badges of office. Two such who tried to hide in a sugarcane field were surrounded, closed in upon as though wild beasts, and clubbed to death ; one was caught resting under a tree, another running away, another standing on duty. All suffered the same fate, and their bodies, dead or half dead, were savagely flung on the flames, which were all that could now be seen of the plague camp.

Meantime, news of the outbreak had reached both civil lines and cantonments—news all the more disquieting because it was so vague. The discordant roar of those rushing, shrieking crowds penetrated to the most distant bungalows of the European quarter, closed though they were against the heat and glare of the April afternoon. That scarcely human howl of an oriental mob under the sway of uncontrolled passion is a sound which none that have heard it can ever forget. Men in offices uneasily wondered what was happening, and sent orderlies to find out. Women in drawing rooms anxiously questioned their servants, and asked themselves and each other whether this was just a city riot or an anti-British rebellion ; whether those yells were getting louder or softer, coming nearer or going away ; whether they ought to do anything ; whether it was

1857 over again ! The Magistrate, however, had more accurate information, from which he could pretty shrewdly gauge alike the intentions, the temper and the dimensions of the outbreak. Quickly telephoning to the Officer Commanding for a regiment of cavalry and a company of infantry, he collected the largest available force of armed police, and rode with them to the segregation camp. But by this time the excitement of the crowds had cooled almost as quickly as the flames they had kindled. In the destruction of the hospital and the murder of its guardians they had achieved their immediate purpose. They were not set against all authority whatever, but only against one eccentric manifestation of it ; nor had they stomach either for an open conflict with armed and drilled forces, or for the risk of being identified individually as abettors of murder and arson. So when the Magistrate arrived with his escort, he found little else save the charred remnants of the huts, a few smouldering corpses with here and there a skull or two, the body of a hospital orderly who had been burnt alive in a ditch, and a few fragments of the mob, which were melting away as fast as their legs could carry them.

But this was only a lull in the storm ; the trouble was not yet over. Fanatics hot from riot and blood and fire do not go home peacefully to supper and bed. All that night they wandered about the city in groups, angry, sulky or curious ; and they were joined by numbers of peaceable but restless people, who had left the markets and shops when the stampede took place at the first alarm. Order was kept all night by British infantry parading the bazars and Indian cavalry rein-

forcing the police stations. But everywhere there were anxiety and uneasiness ; for it was remembered that a large public meeting had been arranged for the town-hall next day, that a critical decision on plague policy had yet to be taken, and that enormous numbers of *lathis* (long brass-bound bamboo clubs) had recently been imported and distributed in the town.

Long before noon next day a large crowd began to assemble on the parade ground, and grew into an excited mob of several thousands. This was irregular ; for though official sanction had been given to the holding of a meeting of protest, this did not include the use of the parade ground, which was, in fact, dangerously near to the jail, the banks, and the public offices and treasury. The Magistrate soon arrived with the Indian Cavalry and the Volunteer Light Horse, who were drawn up between the crowds and the civil station, while strong bodies of police were disposed amongst the people and on the outskirts. Meantime the more respectable citizens, foreseeing a disturbance, were quietly withdrawing, while roughs and bad characters multiplied, and the increasing number of dangerous-looking *lathis* assumed a threatening aspect. Seeing this, the Magistrate ordered the police to disarm the mob, an order which was excitedly resented and resisted. He then formally and audibly declared the crowd an unlawful assembly, and gave it ten minutes to disperse. Law-abiding people obeyed, but the vast majority remained and grew more and more disorderly, while many were observed to be collecting stones and half bricks. The Magistrate now directed the Officer Commanding the Cavalry to clear the parade ground. Steady and in line,

now at a walk and now at a half trot, the *sawars* pushed up and down through the surging masses of men, pressing, hustling, threatening, but not using their swords despite the provocation of being pelted with bricks and stones. Gradually the parade ground was cleared, and by sundown was free from the mob ; while a squadron of cavalry escorted to the jail forty or fifty rioters who had been arrested for violent resistance.

Another emergency had thus been passed ; and the officials might be congratulated on the safety of the banks and public institutions, while it was satisfactory to reflect that the European women and children of civil lines had already in the course of the morning been removed to the greater security of cantonments. At this point, therefore, readers of fiction will expect to hear that the triumph of authority over lawlessness had been so dramatic and complete, that the malcontents dispersed to sleep quietly over their defeat, awoke to re-open their shops and places of business, and humbly accepted the plague regulations for the future. But human nature is not so constructed. In Indian administration, at any rate, no quality is more essential than patience, a virtue which is as difficult to the European as it is easy to the Oriental. Throughout that night there was fear for the civil station ; for sullen mobs kept gathering and regathering about the narrow streets of the city, and it was necessary for three parties of volunteers under magistrates to locate and press them back. In the morning the power and pomp of authority were reinforced by the visits of high officials of Government, who came to investigate and placate the disorders. But the irreconcilables, though impressed, were still

unconvinced, and shops and markets remained grimly shut for some weeks to come. Even the domestic servants and orderlies of the high officials were hampered in their search for supplies, and there were stories of saddles of mutton and loaves of bread being thrown into the canal. And if the highest in the land had their dinners reduced, the marketing difficulties of humbler Europeans can be imagined. Lucky during those three weeks were the messes and *memsahibs* who kept their own fowls and grew their own vegetables. Others, unless they were to do without, had to ransack the countryside for eggs and subsist on tinned stores purchased at ruinous prices from European shops. For though many a bazar dealer was ready enough to sell on the quiet, picketing and intimidation were rife, and the smuggling of supplies from the city was hazardous.

Under high official auspices, solemn meetings were now held, the leaders of guilds were flattered, enquiries were made, the misunderstood plague rules (though three years old), were explained and re-explained, conciliation of every kind was tried. The high officials then departed to write resolutions in the Hills, leaving the local authorities to maintain the majesty of the law, and at the same time to take the people into their confidence and win their adherence. For the former purpose assistant magistrates paraded the deserted bazars with police escorts, in order to restore the sense of security; for the latter they gathered crowds at street corners, asking for the names of influential leaders and native physicians, who would be willing to form committees and to co-operate with the Government by understanding and explaining the benign intentions

of the plague rules. The official street orators announced that *taûn* had now happily disappeared—an assurance which was welcomed with smiles ; but they had to add that *if* by God's will it should come again, then the intelligent co-operators would be asked to facilitate segregation in the interests of all. It was this " if " clause which was received with stolid silence at the time, and with frowns after the magistrates had gone. *Taûn*, argued the populace with rigid logic, must either *be* or *not be* ; and *taûn*, according to official interpretation, meant not only a disease but a set of regulations ; so if the latter remained by order, then it was no good saying that the disease had disappeared. Moreover this calling for the names of leaders sounded suspicious : it was probably a hidden device for getting influential people into jail ; it would therefore be a great mistake to betray their good friends by putting their names on lists for the *sarkar*. And so a conspiracy of silence prevailed, and the shops and places of business remained closed ; while the only policy for the officials was patience, modified by repression when this was deserved. For instance, a renegade policeman who went about repeating the wicked falsehood that the waterworks were poisoned by Government was prosecuted and sent to jail : and a few tradesmen who were found to be in possession of some thousands of brass-headed *lathis* (where the normal demand could be measured in dozens) had their surplus and unexplained stock impounded until quieter times returned.

In the result, passive resistance wore itself out : most fortunately plague did *not* again infect Debiganj, and the segregation camp, though reconstructed, was never

occupied that season. As time went on merchants asked themselves why they were sacrificing their profits, and consumers chafed at want of supplies. Surreptitious nocturnal business began, then increased, then grew bold and extended its hours into daylight. Pickets became unpopular, and began to look the other way when customers came first to the back doors then to the front doors of shops. The high prices paid by Europeans for supplies were soon missed with regret, next connived at in secret, finally competed for without disguise. There was nothing left to strike about ; there was no one left to boycott. The trial of two score of fellow-citizens (some prominent men) for riot, arson and murder, went relentlessly on from Magistrate to Judge, from Judge to High Court ; and when half of these were sentenced to be hanged, and the rest to long terms of imprisonment, there seemed to remain no heroes to worship, no leaders to follow, and no cause to advocate. In a few months business was going on as if nothing had happened ; in a year the riots were almost forgotten, swamped in some new sensation or grievance ; and when plague next came to Debiganj, it had already become fashionable in the province for all who could do so to escape from infected cities into the country ; and what is fashionable soon becomes customary ; and one must follow the custom. So people eagerly evacuated plague-stricken quarters, and segregated themselves, and even come to the authorities to ask for help in doing so ! So effectual is the virtue of patience, and withal so difficult !

THE GATE OF BATHING

To a Hindu woman motherhood is the proudest of joys, widowhood the most humiliating of woes. Janki was a bright young girl lately married to a man who petted her and was proud of her. He loved her soft eyes and warm brown complexion ; he loved her gentle ways and lissom figure as she modestly bent over her cooking when he came back from his fields. He had given her a handsome necklace hung round with rupees when they were betrothed, and a pair of anklets with tinkling bells when they were married. And now that he had good reason to hope for a son and heir, he gave his wife a heavy armlet of solid silver. Janki was as happy as the bride of a prosperous tenant farmer could well be, and she was delighted when a family jaunt was planned to a sacred bathing place on the Ganges. The Ramnaumi festival takes place in April, when the harvest is in and the weather is just getting balmy ; and Ram—incarnation of Vishnu the creator and preserver—is adored as king, hero and faithful husband, while his wife Sita is cherished as the eternal model of Hindu wifehood and chastity. What could set a happier seal on Janki's expectant motherhood than to worship at the shrines of Ram and Sita in the very place where they lived and loved and reigned, and to bathe in Mother Ganges who purifies from sin ?

Konsilia was Janki's husband's sister, and lived in the same house. But how different was her lot !

Though scarcely older than Janki, she was a childless widow, neither wife nor virgin, with much work, little happiness and no hope, the scorn and drudge of the whole household, forbidden the use of jewels and bright clothing. She had been so harshly treated in her late husband's home, that she had returned to her own people ; but even here she was made to feel a failure, a burden, an incubus. However, she too was to join the expedition to the Ganges ; for this was not a mere holiday outing ; it was a religious duty, an acquisition of merit of which poor Konsilia stood sorely in need.

Early on the appointed morning the best pair of bullocks, their horns painted red and necks hung round with shells and bells, was yoked to the family cart, and the women and children crowded in, all in gay gala raiment except Konsilia : she alone was allowed no adornment or colour—only a single coarse white sheet which shapelessly enfolded her whole figure. The rest chattered with excitement, and peeped curiously between the curtains at the ceaseless traffic of the great road : she alone sat silent, oppressed with broodings and forebodings. Merrily they jingled along, while the menfolk walked beside the bullocks, or took turns to drive them. The journey to the Ganges was barely thirty miles, so there was only one night's halt ; and even this was full of novelty and pleasure to Janki. How delightful to be helped down by her strong husband into the cool shade of the spreading banyan tree by the stately old well ; and then to drink the even cooler water from its depths ! What a picnic to cook their food over improvised mud ovens, to savour the rich garlic and clarified butter, to sit near the men as the

hubble-bubbles gurgled, to lie down under the stars by her man, to scent the heavy fragrance of the *nim* and *siras* trees now in blossom, to dream of the bright future, lazily to draw up a blanket in the cool of approaching dawn, and then to wake refreshed full of life and anticipation ! Strange to think that these same delights should be offered to Konsilia also, but should fail to quicken her pulses out of deep dejection and faded apathy : tired in spirit she slept, tired she rose to face the new day !

The journey was resumed as before. The men greeted other pilgrims with " Ram Ram," and were answered with cheerful piety " Sita Ram." The women began to open the curtains of the cart, at first a little, then wider and wider as they approached the Ganges. For on this holy soil there could be no evil, no reproach of immodesty, and *parda* could now be forgotten except for the drawing of a shawl over the eyes whenever a man looked at them. When they arrived there was all the excitement of finding a new camping ground—this time a tamarind grove over-looking the sands of the great river. There were thousands of other pilgrims, but all were good-humoured and friendly, and the long rows of booths supplied the needs of the evening, besides promising endless joys in shopping on the morrow. Another sweet night under the stars, and by dawn all were ready for their religious duties.

Ramganj is no ordinary place of sanctity : it marks the confluence of the Ganges with another mighty river, the Sarju ; and where the streams unite, a third fountain of blessing, visible only to the eyes of faith, adds its sacred flood. Surely the holiest spot in all

Hindustan, wherein to bathe means life and bliss for ever. Unfortunately the precise point of the confluence varies every year, and is often far out in the stream and very deep. The most auspicious time for bathing here is determined by lunar ritual, and this year was to be before dawn on the third day after our pilgrims' arrival. On the first and second mornings they would bathe up-stream in the Ganges itself, where stands a great temple, with wide steps (a *ghat*) sloping down to safe and shallow water.

Hither went our party in the dim twilight of dawn, passing on the way a place where the river was setting strongly against the high bank this side, so that a steep crumbling cliff overhung a deep swirling current about twelve feet below. Here a strong palisade of bamboo had been erected for safety by the authorities; and here Konsilia, who in her listless way had been lagging behind unnoticed, somehow found herself on the wrong side of the barricade. As she peered down, the river could be but dimly seen, but the eddy below gave a sucking, seductive sound. Was Mother Ganges inviting her? Her heart was bursting with a silent, pleading prayer, as she drew her feet mechanically out of her slippers. Was this to secure firmer foothold, or was it because none may enter the sacred presence with shoes on? One step forward, and the earth crumbled. Her body overbalanced. There was a splash—and a sound as of a whirlpool swallowing, gobbling, lapping: The Great Mother had received another child into her bosom of consolation. Will anyone say that a suicide's gate leads never to Heaven?

Konsilia's absence was not at once noted by the rest

of the party : it seldom was, unless there was work to be done. But the light broadened as they reached the *ghat*, and then she was missed. Back went the men to search, and soon discovered the tell-tale shoes, but no other sign of anything. The police were informed and came to look, and launched a boat lower down. But there was obviously no hope, as the current was deep and rapid, and the girl could not swim. Her relatives were easily consoled ; the poor despised creature had nothing to look for in life, and her death was pious and conferred on her great merit, which was not without its reflection on the family. Anyhow, it was high time now to bathe at the *ghat*, and this they all reverently did, taking away with them vessels full of the sacred water to sprinkle in the temples great and small. Then followed an absorbing round of visits to the shrines, shops, and sights of the festival. There were many gods to propitiate, many altars and images, temporary as well as permanent, before which to lay offerings of pice, flour and marigolds. The biggest temple was dedicated to Hanumân, the monkey-deity who had helped Ram to find Sita when she had been abducted to Ceylon. This was an imposing pile of buildings, approached by a steep flight of steps, at the top of which stood a tall deputy magistrate with a hunting crop, keeping some semblance of order and security among the scrambling, perspiring pilgrims. These were numerous and eager, albeit good-humoured and obedient, and it took half an hour's real struggling before Janki could emerge at the top and gain admittance to the half-dozen monkey shrines. The air was heavy with incense, heated humanity, garlic, betel-nut

and the strong aroma of jasmine and marigold. Pice, flowers and Ganges water were poured upon the altars. Many pilgrims would fain have lingered in this temple hot with holiness ; but the police had to keep the long lines slowly moving, and Janki presently emerged glowing with exalted fervour. What she really liked better was the smaller images of Ram and the divine Sita, and on these she lavished her oblations. Best of all were the bright, gay booths, where a few rupees would buy any number of trinkets, toys, and images of her favourite deities. And then what sanctity was here ! Rows and rows of *fakirs* squatted on the sands, stripped almost naked, and surrounded by little fires—their sole possessions a begging-bowl, a pair of tongs and a coiling mass of brown artificial hair. Some reclined on beds of nails on end, others led sacred cows with three horns or two heads, others again had held an arm erect for years, till all blood and sensation had left it and it remained upright and for ever withered. One devotee stood outside the spire of a prominent temple, turning round so as to face the sun squarely from dawn to sunset. These men, thought Janki, had renounced all the illusions (*maya*) of the world and the senses, and would soon be re-absorbed into the universal Brahma. Some repentant sinners were purging their guilt by measuring their length on the ground at every step, and so prostrating themselves along every inch of the ten-mile pilgrimage which led to all the principal shrines.

This programme of joyous devoutness was repeated by Janki and her family on the second day, and by that evening she was in an uplifted state of religious ecstasy.

But the culmination was to come on the third morning,

when they were to bathe before dawn at the actual confluence of the two—nay three rivers, intending thereafter to start homewards again, with large bottles filled with the thrice-sacred water. By four in the morning they were all at the brink, and waded reverently into the cool water, which deepened at every step. Arriving near the holiest of all spots, Janki was consumed with a rapture of piety, and pressed on ever deeper, facing ever eastwards, looking for the first streak of dawn, and not noticing that her husband was delayed by assisting his old mother, and that all of her party were left behind, and indeed out of sight. Presently, when the water was well above her waist, she felt the second current, the current of the Sarju, sweeping in from behind her on the right and urging her forward. Ecstatically she obeyed the Divine impulse, and stepped on further, eager for contact with that third (unseen) river. Ah ! now she felt it ; the water surged to her shoulders, as the ground beneath her feet abruptly shelved downwards. The triple fulness of Mother Ganges was upon her, enveloped her, swept her from all consciousness of self, of time, of place. She knew nothing now, except that all-absorbing possession by the universal spirit without, and the awakening within of the coming life of her child to be. The double current now set strongly, and she was off her feet. But as she came once more to the surface, she just saw as in a flash the first glimmering of dawn. “ Mother Ganges,” she prayed in half-conscious rapture, “grant thy blessing to thy slave, and to her lord, and to her son still unborn !” And the Great Mother received yet another child into her bosom. Another pilgrim had passed through the gate.

REHOBAM'S REVENGE

Many of the land-owning families in North India have feudal and autocratic traditions. Muhammadans in particular, who are by temperament domineering and cherish proud memories of the time when they swept over the country as conquerors, often regard their Hindu tenants as an inferior race, and oppress them with rack-rents and arbitrary exactions of supplies and services.

Following the advice of its revenue officers, who move about among the people and see the real conditions, the Government has from time to time introduced legislation for the protection of a helpless tenantry. But the passing of laws is often slow and even nugatory in its effect. What really matters is the way in which they are administered. This truth is imperfectly understood by Indian reformers, who imagine that to prohibit an abuse is equivalent to suppressing it. They forget that wise executive action is the real remedy, and that this too is ineffectual unless it is supported by solid public opinion. It is not many years ago that a very high official quoted in Council at Simla the well-known couplet—

“ For forms of government let fools contest ;
Whate’er is best administered is best ; ”

but this sentiment was so acutely resented by thin-skinned Indian politicians, that the very high official

thought it better afterwards to explain that his citation of English poetry need not be interpreted to imply that all who disagreed with him were fools.

Akbar Khan was by character and tradition a landlord of the most rigid type. His father had been oppressive enough, but Akbar Khan followed the example of Rehoboam, and made his little finger thicker than his father's loins. In the benevolent legislation passed by the Government for the well-being of peasants he saw no reason whatever for conceding to them any moderation of rents, security of tenure or hereditary rights. His conception of a *ryot* (a word which etymologically ought to mean the recipient of kindness) was simply a serf to be worked and squeezed to the uttermost. So long as his tenants meekly paid their rents, did what they were told, and furnished sufficient supplies of fodder, indigo and milk, they were safe from ejection, but if they resisted, out they went. If they still held on to their land, the new lessee would come prepared for violence and there would be head-breaking and riot. If this then came into Court, the evidence for the old tenant would collapse and for the new would be overwhelming. If the evicted man dared to seek the protection of the pro-tenant laws, his house would be burgled in his absence, or his cattle maimed or lost, while the witnesses who had supported him would be turned out of their land. But, it may be asked, could not the police secure the punishment of violence, house-breaking, mischief, or intimidation? Go to the sub-inspector of the local police station, and ask him how much his place and reputation would be worth if he seriously offended Akbar Khan. Ask what happened

to his predecessor, who lost his appointment for no other reason. That officer, a Hindu and well above the average in honesty, had prosecuted a perfectly true case of kidnapping against a blackguard who was one of the landlord's satellites. Suborned but overwhelming evidence for the defence was produced in Court, and the accused was given the benefit of the doubt ; while the magistrate in his judgement insinuated that the police case had been coloured by anti-Muhammadan prejudice. Nor was this the end of it. The unfortunate sub-inspector a little later found himself accused of torturing an honest tradesman, whose sole offence was alleged to be that he had demanded payment for goods supplied. The facts of this case were that the shopkeeper, heavily bribed by Akbar Khan, had himself chopped off one of his own thumbs, and mutilated the other ; but in the official enquiry the faked evidence was so strong and tangible that the sub-inspector was found guilty and dismissed.

And a powerful landlord had even subtler ways of dealing with a recalcitrant official. Every year the District Magistrate, or at any rate one of his assistants, toured around to size up the work and personnel of the local administration, and to ascertain non-official feelings and opinions. This would be Akbar Khan's opportunity ; he was an important person, who was regarded in powerful quarters as an urbane gentleman of the old school, and was always received and listened to with respect : he also possessed a house in the Hills, and kept two motor cars and three elephants, which (though in fact paid for out of levies laid upon the tenants) were always at the disposal of high officers who wanted

to go long journeys on duty—or to shoot ; he was loyal to the Government and appeared on all the committees and subscription lists of the district. So when this police circle got its annual inspection, it would be quite easy to drop hints about the laziness, incompetence, or aloofness of the sub-inspector. These hints need not be overdone ; they need not accuse him of bribery or cruelty ; but they would be repeated by various informants, and would insensibly make the Magistrate believe that his subordinate was unsuitable to this circle and was—worst insinuation of all—deficient in *tact*. High officers like smooth harmonious administration ; so there would probably be left in the inspection book some such remark as this—“ He means well, but is lacking in tact, and is scarcely suitable to the conditions of this circle. Wants a change.” And the result of this would be the sub-inspector’s early transfer “ for administrative reasons ” to a remote and malarious police-station, where there would be no quarters for his wife and no secondary school for his boys. No, reflected the police officer, it was useless enough to try to run criminal cases without local support ; but it would be suicidal to do so in the teeth of influential opposition. Far better to close one’s eyes to unavoidable abuses, to co-operate with the local gentry, to avoid disagreeable friction, and to establish a reputation for tact. It was not a case of accepting bribes to suppress or fabricate criminal charges ; he would not lend himself to that ; he never took more than his superiors did, viz., an occasional ride in a car or on an elephant ; and all that was necessary was to abstain from active efforts in all cases which threatened the landlord’s interests.

However, law is law, and British courts of justice always stand open for its administration. In course of time the tenantry began to talk of combining to assert their legal rights ; and at last an opportunity arose. Every thirty years the land revenue is revised by a Settlement Officer, who at the same time corrects and brings up to date the records of agrarian rights. This necessarily leads to disputes which can only be decided by litigation. The down-trodden peasants of Debinagar heard that the Settlement Officer had given a pro-tenant ruling in some test cases similar to their own, and they were actually visited by touts of the pleader who had won those test cases for his clients. They knew the danger, but their present conditions were intolerable. They had patiently endured chastisement with whips by Akbar Khan's father, though he indeed had been no Solomon in other respects. But this chastisement with scorpions by the new Rehoboam was goading them to desperation. So two hundred of them went in a body to the Settlement Officer's court, and filed suits for occupancy and hereditary rights. At numerous contentious hearings they appeared, thronging the court compound, while expensive barristers argued legal points within. At last the cases were decided in their favour, and they rejoiced, but only soberly ; for this was not the end. Akbar Khan promptly filed appeals, and the last word on this vital issue would not be pronounced until the same arguments had been repeated in the final Court. The critical day came at length, and the peasants filled half a train on their anxious journey to the supreme tribunal. The excitement was great, the suspense acute. Finally in the evening judge-

ment was pronounced. The peasants had won ! Oh ! the relief, the happiness ! At last they were free men, and their land was their own and their children's ! Their tenure would now be protected by the courts, their rents moderated. This day would be memorable for all time in the annals of Debinagar. Exultantly they made their long journey home, arriving late at night.

But as they came in sight of Debinagar still a mile away, fierce flames burst out in a dozen separate quarters of the village, and by dawn nothing was left but the smouldering ruins of thatched roofs, household treasures, and teeming threshing-floors. The incendiaries were never discovered.

Rehoboam had had his revenge !

THE POSTMASTER'S DAUGHTER

Pandit Moti Ram was an overseer in the Irrigation department, and an official of the new school. Young, good-looking, and capable at his work, he had absorbed enough English education to despise his own religion, but not enough to believe in any other. In character he was vain, extravagant and self-indulgent, and he shared quarters with a friend of similar tastes, who, being an inspector of Excise, was able to obtain large quantities of liquor at favourable rates. Both the young men were bachelors, regarding matrimony as an interference with pleasure, and refusing to listen to any suggestions of matches made up for them by old-fashioned parents. They lived in the central part of a considerable town, which was the headquarters of a subdivision, and they were the nucleus of a clique of boon-companions and dandies, who though trained in sports and other British pursuits, preferred the pleasures of the bazar and made the evenings boisterous with wine and song. Moti Ram's rooms were two storeys up and had access to a flat roof where he and his friends made merry on hot weather nights. Below them was an open square, on the other side of which was the post office, with family quarters attached and giving on to the square. The noisy revels of the young men were a disturbance to their more sober neighbours, and particularly to the postmaster, who was an elderly widower and a studious Bengali Kayastha with old-

fashioned notions. This conservative old gentleman not only thought it scandalous and wicked for Brahmans and Muhammadans to gather together drinking, singing ribald songs, and playing on stringed instruments usually associated with loose characters ; but he had grave misgivings about his daughter, who was a widow of twenty-two with a child of three, and assisted her father in the post office. Sukhi by name, she was buxom and seductive looking, and more light-hearted than the old man liked. She was decently educated, competent at helping with the postal accounts, and fairly attentive, not to say indulgent, to her child ; but there was no outlet for her high spirits. Though not *parda-nashîn* she could not of course be allowed to roam the bazars alone, and there were difficulties about society for her since, as Bengalis, they were practically foreigners in Upper India. She could take the air in the roomy courtyard behind the women's quarters facing the square ; but this, in spite of a six-foot wall, was in full view from the upper storey where Moti Ram and his friends held their revels. More than once the postmaster had caught his daughter with suspicious-looking notes and little parcels ; more than once he had seen the Pandit loitering about outside the courtyard wall. And if outside, why not inside ? Solemn paternal rebukes did not improve matters, and he began to notice in her a growing absence of mind, and even of body.

Then came a black day. Late one evening Sukhi was missing. He waited and watched, for she might return any minute. He searched the sitting-room and her bedroom ; she had left her child, had taken some

clothes, and was gone—he could guess where. Indignant with anger and shame, he hurried across the square to Moti Ram's house. The Pandit scarcely troubled to deny the charge ; he simply laughed at the old man's entreaties. There could be no doubt that she was there. Torn with agitation he consulted respectable neighbours, who suggested the Police. Those officials courteously recorded his story, but could do nothing without warrant. No housebreaking or theft was alleged, and the girl was of age and a widow, so that no charge of kidnapping would lie. And so the night passed.

Next morning the postmaster sought the Collector, who was fortunately only twelve miles away, and who diverted his tour so as to come and make local enquiries. For though not a criminal offence, this was a grave scandal,—an unmerited disgrace upon a respected public servant, the postmaster, and in the overseer a serious moral lapse calling for departmental enquiry. Sukhi was in Moti Ram's house, sure enough, and she refused to return. Her bedroom and boxes were searched, and love-letters in the Pandit's handwriting were found : one of these began "*Prân piâri*," a beautiful Hindu expression meaning "*Beloved soul*," and contained amorous solicitations : enclosed in another was a little album of nude photographs obscene enough to raise a blush even in Port Said. The Collector impounded these compromising documents, took up the enquiry himself, and sent for the culprits, first placing Moti Ram under suspension. The overseer attempted no denials, seeing nothing particularly wrong in seducing a willing widow, and nothing revolting in corrupting her mind with lewd photographs. Asked whether he

intended to marry her, and how this was possible for a Brahman—the girl being of different caste and a widow—he said coolly he would think about it ; it might be possible if they both joined the *Arya Samâj* (this is a modern society of Hindu reformers, which encourages inter-caste unions and the remarriage of widows). Sukhi too when she came in, was quite composed and unrepentant : she said she was in love with Moti Ram, and absolutely refused to return to her father, despite his pleadings. She admitted the secret courtship, the love-letters, and the presents ; as she spoke, she proudly caressed a heavy gold bracelet which she wore above her elbow : this was evidently a recent present, and was engraved in Hindi letters with the word “ Sukh,” which in that language means rest or peace, and was therefore a pretty play on the girl's own name. Asked delicately about the obscene photographs, she admitted receiving these also—shyly enough but without any sense of horror or repulsion. It is to be feared that the home training of Indian girls, while insisting upon chastity of body, pays insufficient attention to purity of mind. At any rate, Sukhi showed no penitence : the burden of her plea was simply that the “ Overseer Sahib ” should be restored to his position and go unpunished. The Collector had to point out that her paramour did not even undertake to marry her. What would happen if he deserted her ? Surely it was much better to return to her father. But she would not listen, and the poor old postmaster went home broken-hearted.

The Collector sent up his report, recommending Moti Ram's dismissal ; and dismissed he was by the

head of the department. Perhaps neither officer felt that so severe a punishment was really deserved by what after all was only an offence against social morals : perhaps they believed that the prospect of official ruin would force Moti Ram's hand and make him marry the girl. At any rate, so it fell out. Everyone knew that an appeal lay to the Government ; and before this could come up for decision, both the lovers had joined the *Arya Samâj* and married, obscurely but validly enough, according to the rites of that sect. Neither of them cared one whit more for the principles taught by the *Arya Samâj* than the reader does. But that society, being anxious for educated adherents, made no uncomfortable enquires, while all that Moti Ram and Sukhi wanted was to be wedded before the appeal was heard. So when the case came before the great man, he found on the record a recent report that the overseer had at last done the honourable thing. Smiling a little grimly to think that the official bluff had succeeded, he cancelled the dismissal, and substituted reduction in grade, with a transfer to a distant and undesirable station where the unpleasant scandal had not penetrated.

To their new station the newly-married couple went, leaving the child, whom neither in the least wanted, to be the companion and consolation of the lonely postmaster. For a few weeks Moti Ram and Sukhi were happy together ; but a cooling passion is a poor enough foundation for wedded bliss, and, as Aristotle says, there is no test of love like living together. So these two found to their cost. The overseer gradually discovered that his bride was vain, empty-headed, devoid of interest in his work, an extravagant and

listless housekeeper ; she missed the more orderly comforts of her father's establishment, and openly expressed disappointment at her husband's pay and position, both now reduced. Sukhi on her part found Moti Ram ill-tempered, wayward and sensual ; he began to neglect her, and to spend his evenings at rowdy parties at which she knew that men were not the only revellers. Quarrels between the two became more frequent and bitter, reconciliations less fervent and satisfying. Lonely and jealous, she nagged at him and lost pride in her house and person. He retorted with sulky complaints, and once flung at her the angry taunt that he always found *Sukhi* at home, but never *Sukh* (peace), a cruel reminiscence of the tender endearments he had whispered when he gave her that gold engraved bracelet.

But worse was to come. As an irrigation officer his work included much touring up and down the great canal, and at first he had taken his wife with him. But a day came when he abruptly said he was going on a long tour down the canal by himself, and off he started with the servants, leaving Sukhi alone except for one useless old woman. By himself ? Ah ! had that been true, she might have borne it. But she had good cause for suspicion and jealousy, and demeaned herself to hiring a spy to watch her husband. There was a woman with him ! What hope or happiness was now left for poor Sukhi ? Her father alienated, her unloved child estranged, her wife's position outraged, her whole life a sick, aching vacancy !

Pandit Moti Ram was in good spirits, and thought he

had shaken off his moodiness. It was rather a lark touring down the canal with this bright young girl, instead of the irritating Sukhi,—to whom, however, he felt kindly disposed now that he had temporarily got rid of her. The bungalow they had reached that morning was comfortably and beautifully situated where the wide canal, now at its fullest, roared over a splendid weir. He was fond of shooting, and in the afternoon had been lucky enough to see a fine crocodile basking in the sun on the opposite bank, and to hit it clean behind the ear with a long rifle shot. His men had already taken the body back to the bungalow, meaning to skin it before their master returned ; and Moti Ram, having strolled back, was leaning on the bridge over the weir in the twilight, thinking that the skin would make a showy suit-case for himself and a nice bag for this attractive girl. Suddenly as he gazed at the rapids, he caught sight of a tangle of brushwood which was jammed against one of the stone piers ; and amidst the brushwood was a human body, which swayed horribly from side to side as the swirl round the pier ever tried, and ever failed, to release it and wash it downstream. It was evidently the corpse of a woman, probably young ; but there was something awry and lop-sided about it. Looking closer, he saw the reason for this. *The body had lost an arm !* Presently a drifting log dislodged it, and it was with a sense of relief that Moti Ram saw it float quickly down the canal.

When he reached the house, the girl met him in the verandah, all smiles and merriment. “A monster crocodile,” she said ; “and see what they have found

in its stomach !” And she handed him a woman’s heavy gold bracelet. On it was engraved in Hindi letters the word “ *Sukh*.”

Sukhi had found peace !

WATER

Lachman Singh, head-man of Jaitpur, walked slowly back from the canal to the village with his brother Thakurs: gloomily they discussed the long rainless summer; anxiously they glanced at the sky still brazen and cloudless. The hundred or so irrigated acres of cotton, sugarcane and millets along the distributary were in fair condition, though even these would hardly come to maturity unless either rain came or the canal was filled again. The intensively cultivated circle immediately around the village site also was green and thriving; for this could be sufficiently, though laboriously, irrigated from the three fine old wells which stood at the edge of the houses. That very morning the Collector had come and asked the old men about these wells, and had evidently been relieved to hear that two at least of them had never been known to dry up in the very worst of droughts, so that there was no fear of men dying of thirst, though of course the labour of pulling up water for the cattle and the fields became very severe when the spring level sank abnormally low. But there were a couple of thousand acres of unirrigable lands gradually sloping down to the steep ravines of the Setwa river; and these now, instead of being green with ripening autumn crops, stretched bare and scorched, dry and hard with dust and despair.

It was the end of September, and there had been no rain for a year, except a few premature showers in

June. These at the time had raised hopes of an early monsoon, and rice, cotton and maize had been sown ; but all of these had withered ; for the rains this year had completely failed, and instead of damp life-giving breezes from the south, a blistering wind from the western deserts had blown at intervals ever since March. The farmers themselves were not so badly off ; for there had been good seasons in the past, and they had stocks of food and considerable credit in the bazar, while their wives wore quantities of jewellery, coarse, but of silver. But the worst distress this year was going to be to the cattle. The straw of last spring's harvest would soon be exhausted, the irrigated millets and maize were short in stalk, and there was practically no grass, while the big grazing-ground towards the river was bare of pasture. Cattle are the life of an Indian village ; for not only do the cows give milk, but ploughing, threshing, carting, and water-drawing are all done with bullocks. Today the Thakurs of Jaitpur had gone to the canal bungalow to lay petitions before the Collector, who had begun his winter tour much earlier than usual this year on account of the agricultural situation. They had asked for Government advances for the import of forest hay for the cattle, and for one more irrigation from the canal in order to mature their autumn crops ; and he had passed favourable orders, and had also inspected an area suitable for temporary earthen wells, promising to advance money to dig these in order to make winter sowings possible by artificial irrigation. As to fodder for the cattle, he said he would do his best with the forest authorities, but strongly advised selling superfluous stock before the price fell further and fodder

became even scarcer. But the Thakurs felt they simply *could* not sell any of their cattle ; it was true they had far more than they needed, and inferior animals eat as much as superior ; but no one would buy now but butchers ; and such a destination was revolting alike to the pride of a Thakur and to the piety of a Hindu.

October passed and November, then December, and the drought continued ; indeed rain was hardly to be expected at this time of the year. Anxiety deepened into distress, and distress into famine. The canal, however, had run again in the second half of October, and this had ripened the autumn harvest, as well as facilitating winter sowings, on the very limited area commanded by irrigation. The Collector too had advanced the promised loans for earthen wells, seed and other useful purposes, and a certain amount of hay had been imported from distant forests and sold cheap to cattle-owners. And now in the new year large public works had been opened all over the district, and hither flocked thousands of both sexes who were able-bodied enough to do earthwork. In every village too lists were made of the aged, cripples and helpless paupers, who were to receive Government cash relief every fortnight. Candidates for these doles were carefully scrutinized by the Collector's assistants, who witnessed strange sights on their visits of inspection. From their hiding-places came forth unsuspected human horrors—consumptive, leprous, syphilitic, anaemic, withered, blind, crippled. Such as these exist always in every town and large village in India, and they are only elicited, not created, by famine. Heartrending photographs of such groups, however, are sometimes sent

to England, where they are reproduced in the illustrated papers and excite the compassion of warm-hearted philanthropists. In normal times these helpless paupers are maintained by local charity, so that no poor-law is required ; since the Indian farmer is open-handed enough when his threshing-floors are overflowing with grain. But when famine comes the sources of benevolence dry up, and the State has to come to the rescue. But along with genuine cases less deserving claimants are sometimes found on the lists, and these have to be struck off, with a rebuke to the local official who has included them. To give gratuitous doles to a widow of substance merely because she is a Brahman is natural enough to an Indian subordinate, but to British ideas is favouritism. Or a man quite fit to work may be asked what he is by profession, and may proudly answer " a beggar "—a reply which is again quite satisfying to the village elders. Evidently a society which regards begging as a dignified profession is one in which rigid discrimination is required : for inspecting officers are charged not only to prevent starvation, but to avoid pauperization at the expense of the public purse.

Poor humanity was thus provided for by a paternal Government ; but the suffering of the cattle was increasing and could not be wholly relieved. By January the fodder crops had been consumed, and imported hay could suffice for only the superior beasts. Emaciated animals nibbled at thatched roofs, or fell down, never to rise again. Many farmers were already selling to dealers, grimly suppressing the impious conviction that this could only mean the slaughter-house, where in fact the price of thin kine and of lean beef was daily

falling. Lachman Singh himself thought of disposing of some useless animals, which could not possibly live long ; but when he suggested this to Naidu his wife, she indignantly protested. " Nay," she cried, throwing her silver bangles on the floor, " rather sell those." " But this jewellery," replied Lachman, " is our very *abru* (honour) ; and that I cannot sell or pawn." " Our kine," retorted Naidu, " are even more our *abru*, and sacred withal. Besides, if thou sellest them, it will be noised in all the village ; but if my bracelets, none will know." So Lachman Singh took no steps, and the worst of his herds shortly died, while his wife kept her ornaments intact.

But for the poor cattle even worse threatened—thirst ! The tanks were quite dry, and the wells by March gave no water after noon. The Thakurs hastened with petitions, and it is to be feared with more solid inducements, to the irrigation officials, praying that that their big tank be filled from the canal ; and their prayer was granted. But Jaitpur was not the only thirsty petitioner. Just beyond the distributary was the Native State of Satia, of which the border village, adjoining Jaitpur, was Belra, inhabited by caste-fellows and kinsmen of the Jaitpur Thakurs. These men also applied to have their tank filled, and their petition too was granted. So as the water available was not enough for two large tanks, the farmers of the two villages, who were naturally bound together by ties of friendship and intermarriage, were thrown into mutual discord. When the precious water was to come down the canal, Jaitpur made ready its connecting channel overnight, and early next morning the Thakurs and labourers

went to open the sluice. To their surprise, they found a bare dribble of water coming down. Walking up the distributary they soon saw the reason for this. Their kinsmen of Belra had worked all night constructing a dam across the distributary, and above this by daylight had opened their own sluice, through which the coveted water was now rushing to slake the thirst of the cattle of Belra. This was not to be endured ; and Jaitpur protested warmly, hotly, furiously. Belra replied that they too had sanction, and their sluice was higher up. Jaitpur retorted that their sanction was given first ; and they proceeded to attack the dam with spades. The hot-heads of Belra dragged the diggers aside ; those of Jaitpur defended them with cudgels. The Belra farmers rushed home for their guns and ammunition ; for in Native States arms may be carried without licence, and every Thakur has his gun. This put the men of Jaitpur at a disadvantage, since they had no weapons except spades and cudgels. These, however, they used to great effect, and had breached the dam and knocked its defenders senseless before the Belra Thakurs returned with their guns. There followed a free fight, which both sides thoroughly enjoyed, but Jaitpur less so because the other side had an unfair advantage in the possession of firearms. Kinsmen recognised and belaboured each other with cheerful fury. On the one side Lachman Singh was prominent, wielding his *lathi* with fine effect ; on the other side he could see Bhairon Singh, his daughter's betrothed, doing great execution with his new double-barreled gun—the gift of his prospective father-in-law. The result was inevitable. Jaitpur retreated, riddled with

indiscriminate gun-shot, while Belra repaired the dam and filled their tank. A score from each side hastened to their respective police-stations to report, each laying the blame on the other. But there was this difference ; that Belra minimised the affair, having only a few broken heads to show, which amounted to no more than simple hurt ; whereas Jaitpur complained of riot with dangerous weapons, and unprovoked attempt to murder ; for at least a dozen of them went to the hospital to have gun shots extracted, while Lachman Singh himself lost an eye. The British authorities took a grave view of this border breach of the peace, and fifteen of the Jaitpur ringleaders were arrested, and their guns and ammunition examined. Inside Lachman Singh's cheek was found a shot of the same number as Bhairon Singh's cartridges—a circumstance which did not relieve his mortification, or that of his wife Naidu or his daughter Rukminia. This little maiden, now nearly sixteen, was devoted to her betrothed Bhairon Singh, and was longing for the pride and happiness of being united to him a few months hence. What a dreadful thing if he were sent for long years to jail ! The British courts were very strict, and made an absurd fuss about this little riot, which, after all, was only a friendly affair as between hot-tempered kinsmen. It would be much simpler, she thought, if the double case were tried in Satia, where the officers were more sympathetic and lenient. Sentiments of this kind began to grow also on the injured Thakurs of Jaitpur, who, as they recovered from their wounds, began to think it would be very troublesome to have to go time after time to the distant British courts to give evidence,

when the headquarters tribunal of Satia was so much nearer and more easy-going. The water could not be recovered by imprisoning their relatives, and they would probably get just as much compensation in the Satia court. April was now ending, and as soon as the rains came, they would want all their time and energies for their fields. So their accounts of the quarrel began to soften and weaken, and the British authorities feared that the evidence was breaking down.

Then Rukminia thought of a plan. After all, it was a question of jurisdiction. On this side of the distributary was British India ; on that side Satia State. The fight actually took place on both sides, or on the border. It ought to be possible to persuade the authorities that the whole affair had happened on that side. So Rukminia talked to her mother, who sympathized. She loved both her daughter and Bhairon Singh, and the point of honour regarding their early marriage seemed much more important than any principle of abstract justice. It was indeed bad enough that her own husband should have been shot by his son-in-law to be ; but the disgrace of this might be concealed in Satia, whereas it would be blurted out to the world in a British Court. It did not prove very difficult to persuade Lachman Singh to this view ; so one day he drove his wife and daughter to Satia, where certain recognised methods of persuasion procured for him an interview with the Minister of State. To this great man Naidu unfolded her piteous story, emphasising her daughter's tender age and loving grief, her family's honour and services to the State, and, withal, the dignity that would accrue to the Minister himself by trying so important a case

Moved by her entreaties, the Minister sought an audience of the Maharaja, to whom he represented that under an ancient *sanad* no border quarrel should be decided without His Highness's co-operation: that this case, if tried in a British court, threatened to infringe the immemorial prerogative of the *Raj* of Satia; and that a despatch to this effect should be sent to the Political Department through the British Agent. To this the Maharaja, who was somnolent and understood little more than that his personal dignity was somehow threatened, vaguely assented. So a tremendous despatch in high-flown Persian was sent through the proper channel, and took a month to reach the Collector. Meantime, the Minister himself hastened to pay his respects to that officer, and solemnly pointed out that though the justice of the British courts was above reproach and celebrated all over the world, yet in this particular case His Highness the Maharaja was personally interested, and would feel infinitely obliged if he were not deprived of the privilege of adjudicating through his own tribunals on a disturbance which had occurred in fact in Satia territory. On this last point the Minister produced maps, and said he had personally satisfied himself by inspection of the ground. The Collector also had maps, and had in reality seen the place, but he was too polite to contradict the Minister, and knew moreover that for political reasons it was prudent to oblige the Maharaja. The question of jurisdiction was in fact doubtful, and it would be graceful to yield the point, instead of inviting controversy. Besides, there might in any case be an acquittal, as the prosecution evidence seemed very invertebrate; and after all the

whole affair was nothing but a temporary quarrel between Thakurs, to whom truculence was a virtue and head-breaking a pastime. So when the grandiloquent official letter reached the Collector a few weeks later, he courteously replied that he saw no objection to the removal of the whole case to Satia jurisdiction ; and thither it was formally transferred under legal authority.

By the time the leisurely hearing began, the Thakurs of Jaitpur were in good spirits. The rains had broken copiously, ploughings and sowings were well advanced, and the Collector had made further loans for cattle to replace the casualties of the drought. The litigants of both villages were privately reconciled, though officially they had to give evidence against each other. In the Satia court there was no menacing talk of attempted murder ; all that was to be expected was a few convictions of simple hurt, with small fines for those who had aimed straightest and similar compensation for those who had suffered most. So the Thakurs rather enjoyed the case, regarding it as an equitable sort of gamble, and came away contented with their losses and gains. Even Lachman Singh did not grumble ; for though he had lost an eye, he had gained a son-in-law, and he was also very proud because the Collector had now given him a gun-licence, nominally for the protection of the village, but really for the headman's personal aggrandisement.

On the British side the police, having been defrauded of a good case, uttered a few murmurs about collusion and unpunished lawlessness : but there were few indeed who guessed, how much the course of justice had been

deflected, and a fluttering of diplomatic dovescotes had been caused, by the scheming of a loving little maiden who wanted to get married.

AN AMATEUR PARSON

“ Our church, as at present it stands,
Has no congregation or steeple :
The lands are all low-lying lands ;
— And the people are low lying people ! ”

Last time I was on furlough, I was strolling about Soho, rejoicing in my newly-gained freedom from work, worry and responsibility, when these words caught my eye in an old volume on the shilling shelf of a book shop. It was a collection of short verses by a Bengal civilian, and I could find nothing else of outstanding merit ; but the felicity of that stanza was alone worth more than a shilling ; so I bought the book and walked on, reflecting how many churches I had known in India which lacked even a parson, to say nothing of the rest of the outfit.

Sometimes even a building is wanting, and the faithful have to assemble in a drawing room or billiard room of the club. Two small stations at least I could remember where a court room of the Collector's cutcherry had been fitted up as a church, the magistrate's dais being transformed into a respectable chancel ; and in one of these, when the floor and matting of the “ nave ” had worn into disreputable holes, they were replaced by chaste black and white tiling of ecclesiastical pattern. This allocation of funds allotted for revenue buildings was inspired by a Collector who himself officiated as parson, and was carried into execution by a surveyor

who thought less of financial orthodoxy than he did of pleasing the powers that be: but it may perhaps be justified by the fact that the holes had been worn more by the litigants of the past than by the worshippers of the present. At any rate, a beautiful imported tapestry was also hung behind the altar (once the magistrate's seat) in the same church; and the purchase of this by the congregation showed that they were ready to spend their own money as well as official funds.

In quite small stations, however, a nice little church building is often found; but this is visited only once a quarter by a clergyman (generally a missionary); so that if regular services are wanted, they must usually be held by the Collector. I have known one such officer persevere in this optional duty till his congregation consisted of only his wife and child, whereupon he closed the church till the others came in from camp. Much as he appreciated the matchless devotional language of the Church of England liturgy, he felt that his family could enjoy this as well in their own drawing room as in an empty church.

But it is not only the buildings and the parsons which are heterogeneous in India. So are the congregations. I have myself held services for many weeks together in a church which was attended only by two Roman Catholics, one Scotch Presbyterian, one Plymouth Brother, one Methodist, one Baptist, and only three members of the Church of England—all generally accompanied by their wives. The Baptist, who was an important local official, was possessed of that rarity in Anglo-India—a father in the country; and I remember the old gentleman coming to visit his son. When

he arrived, we heard that though brought up as a Baptist, he had latterly found that faith inadequate to his spiritual needs, and had started a sect of his own, of which he was the sole minister and, so far as I could make out, the single adherent. Early in the week he sent round a notice to the effect that a service would be held by the Rev.—— in his son's house next Sunday afternoon. Though this made me smile a little, I reflected that the local Christians had not shown themselves to be rigid sectarians, that Mr.—— was a venerable and pious old gentleman whose son with his family had hitherto done me the courtesy of attending *my* services, that this was no occasion for esoteric exclusiveness, and that it would be graceful if I now returned the courtesy by attending *his* service. So I closed the church that Sunday, and went with my party to hear the fervent impromptu prayers and solemn discourse of this latest Athanasius. So far as I recollect, the chief differentia of his doctrine was an insistence upon total abstinence, especially for British soldiers, of whom there was not one in the station.

Taking occasional services is not the only quasi-clerical function of the Collector of a small station. Another is the care of the local cemetery, which is often full of interesting old inscriptions as well as massive monuments. Quaint stanzas which will not scan and pious jingles which will not rhyme are frequent, and it is rather touching to see enormous blocks of masonry piled above tiny children. Remarkable too is the eschatological imagery affected by certain Eurasian families. In one cemetery of my acquaintance it was fashionable to erect marble structures resembling a sort of celestial

fortress, in the lower part of which was a little pair of gates of carved alabaster ; these gates were neither quite open nor quite shut, and beneath was the inscription—

“ For thee the gates of Heaven are ever ajar.” Considering the physical girth to which most Eurasians attain, I do not know whether there was more pathos or more unconscious humour in the cautious modesty of that word “ ajar.” Here was no triumphant entry of the redeemed soul through wide-flung portals ; the suggestion was rather of a scraping and a smuggling through a reluctant back-door.

But responsibility for the cemetery may mean more than caring for its decency and admiring its monuments, as I once found to my cost. It was in a fair-sized civil station which boasted a resident parson, and a large Eurasian population in railway lines. When the clergyman took a month’s leave to the Hills in September, he made over the church and cemetery to my charge ; and I remember that the very next day I received a visit from a good-looking Eurasian woman, who wanted me to marry her to a man in the station who was then taking care of her. Seeing from her card that she was called “ Mrs. Pereira,” and noticing that she wore bright colours, I asked in some surprise whether she was a widow. “ Not exactly, she replied ; “ Mr. Pereira was unkind to me, and went away two years ago, when we were living a long way from here, and I have heard nothing since, though I have enquired and advertised. Here is his photograph. Cannot that marriage be cancelled, since he has deserted me ? ” I was not quite clear whether she consulted me as magistrate, lawyer

or temporary parson ; but in any case, after glancing at the photograph, which was signed " James Pereira," I had to send her away with a polite negative. A week or two later a respectable railway employee called in the morning, and said that his acquaintance, Mr. Joseph, an Indo-Portuguese Christian, had died suddenly in the night : would I bury him that same evening ? As Mr. Joseph was a stranger to me and indeed a newcomer to the station, I made two stipulations : first, I must have a medical certificate of the *bona fides* and cause of the death ; second, I must be satisfied that the deceased had been a Christian of some sort. In a couple of hours my visitor himself brought the medical certificate, and an adequate guarantee of Mr. Joseph's religion. It seemed that he had arrived only a few days before from South India, had got a small job on the railway, but had promptly gone to hospital and had now died of pneumonia. So I told his friend to get the coffin ready by six that evening, and I would arrange for the grave. The latter gave me no trouble. In every Indian cemetery there always stands an empty grave ready for emergencies ; and, if one removes the covering board and gazes down, the sombre (if morbid) reflection may come that the next occupant may be—who knows ?—perhaps oneself. So all I had to do was to collect a few coolies with spades, and to drive myself to the cemetery at six. When I arrived, there was no sign of the funeral party. I waited, took a drive, and returned, still to find no one ; waited again, drove again, returned again, and waited till half past seven. It was now dark ; so I sent word to the mourners that I would bury Mr. Joseph at six next morning, and went to the

club for a rubber. At 8. 15 my partner had just secured a contract of four spades, when a club servant whispered to me that a " railway gentleman " wanted to see me. In the verandah I found my friend of the morning, and beyond, in the hot, drizzly compound, hovered half a dozen uneasy figures, with a long black thing amongst them. I told my visitor it was now too late. It is true my official training had unfortunately not included sufficient knowledge of ecclesiastical law to be sure off-hand whether burials in consecrated ground by night were technically regular or irregular : but I made up my mind quickly, and solemnly asserted that they were illegal. And indeed it seemed unreasonable—even uncanny, to be burying a man in a pitch-dark churchyard, in pouring rain, at nine o'clock at night, when it was quite easy to wait a few hours till daylight. So the funeral party went dejectedly away, and I returned to find that my partner had gone out in four spades, which finished the rubber.

At nine I was halfway through dinner, when shuffling steps were heard outside, and my orderly announced a party of Eurasians. As I came out, I was almost deafened by the strepitant noises of the night ; the rain hissed, frogs chattered, mosquitos buzzed, crickets chirruped ; but below this tropical diapason I was conscious of a low mumbling of those mourners who clustered round the long black thing in a far corner of the verandah. Their chief again came forward and addressed me :— " I have come again to plead for this poor fellow and for my friends. Could not your honour put him underground to-night ? "

" Impossible ; it would be irregular at night ; and

besides it is pouring with rain. You should have come at six this evening. I waited till it was dark."

"It was the carpenter who delayed us, Sir; and it would not take long now. It would be enough for your honour to say a few religious words over him."

"In consecrated ground I must say the whole service," I replied; "and that is impossible to-night. Come to the cemetery at six in the morning."

"*But what shall we do with the box?*" This remarkable question made me a little impatient. "Do anything you like with the box," I said, "so long as you don't leave it here. I will meet you at six tomorrow. Good-night."

They removed the coffin reluctantly, and I soon went to bed; but sleep did not come readily. I could not help thinking of those poor superstitious Eurasians, nervous of the idea of a night close to an unburied man, fervently anxious to be rid of that sinister "box," scrupulous that the correct thing should be done, yet content that a fellow Christian should be hurriedly thrust out of sight in a muddy ditch, provided that "a few religious words" were said over him by the head of the district in the middle of the night. When I reached the cemetery gate at sunrise, the first person I saw was Mrs. Pereira. "Good morning," I said, "I suppose you have no news of your husband?" The reply startled me:— "He is in that box, but they won't open it for me!" This could only be suspicion; but she had reasons to give. At night she had heard of the stranger's death, and his description seemed to tally with her husband. She was allowed to search his effects, and had found a testament with "James Pereira" on

the flyleaf in the same handwriting as was on the photograph. Sure enough, the handwriting seemed to be the same. It *might* be true : Pereira *might* have changed his name, and drifted here for employment, never dreaming that his deserted wife had come to live in the same place. It could only be proved by opening the coffin, and showing the body, if still recognisable, to Mrs. Pereira, and comparing it with the photograph. The parson's house was just across the road, and a screw-driver was fetched in a moment. In ten minutes the coffin was open : the body *was* recognisable—just ; it was undoubtedly the man in the photograph ; the woman was sure of him ; so was her sister who was with her ; it was Pereira !

“ Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust ” ; it was soon over. The mourners, who looked as if they had watched through a night of dread, dispersed gladly, with relief written on every feature. Mrs. Pereira was free to marry again ; but I was taking no more risks. For *this* ceremony I waited for the real parson to return and the banns to be cried.

A RELIGION OF BROTHERLY UNITY

"The Allah of Islam has a human body, with eyes all over, even in his under parts."

"Allah lies upside down on the heavenly throne, curly-haired, handless, stark naked, face downwards, thighs upraised."

"Allah has let loose Satan to deceive mankind and fill Hell. He is the chief of intriguers."

"The faith of Islam depends upon virgins and liquor."

"According to Islam all things were created from the sweat of a peacock and the wax of its ears. Nay, the very Light of Muhammad was born of unclean sweat such as this."

With these words the lecturer wiped his brow, and flicked the perspiration contemptuously to the ground, while his Muhammadan listeners glowered and glared at him with gathering fury.

The utterer of these passages and of other insults unrepeatably lurid, foul and obscene, was a young man of twenty-two, called Karma Gir. Highly respectable and educated, as those much-abused words are understood in native India, he was a zealous adherent of the Arya Samaj faith. This modern sect of Hindu reformers believes in the mythical golden age of ancient India, abjures the current abuses of *parda*, infant-marriage and caste, and preaches that the salvation of the country lies in a return to the doctrines of the prehistoric Vedas, with their purity from idol-worship and their more spiritual

conception of the Almighty. Under the aegis of the British Government, which tolerates all religions and favours none, the Arya Samaj has established monastic seminaries called *gurukuls* in various parts of North India, and at one of the most exclusive of these, beautifully situated on the sacred river, Karma Gir had for the last five years been studying comparative theology, but not, unfortunately, comparative religion, which is a very different thing. The former had taught him to believe that variations in faith made harmony and brotherly love impossible, that anthropomorphism in particular was anathema, especially in Islam and Christianity, that these creeds as well as modern Hinduism must yield to the Vedic conception of God, and that without uniformity of doctrine there could be no unity of heart or of national life. If he had studied the comparative history of religions, he would have known that it is teachings of just this academic kind which, when carried into proselytizing practice, have all down the ages desolated mankind for the glory of the Godhead, and wrecked human lives and homes in order to compel intellectual assent to divine dogmas. If, abandoning abstract polemics, he had lived in the world or learned anything about real men and women, he might have realised how poor humanity, in its gropings after the infinite, craves a personal, a humanized, even a suffering deity ; he might even have had an inkling that " God fulfils Himself in many ways." Unfortunately Karma Gir, fostered in esoteric seclusion, pampered in religious vanity, a show pupil of the monastery which he adorned, was blankly ignorant of the teachings of history. Worse still, he had no notion of his own ignorance. Instead,

he posed as a grave and finished theologian, whose duty it was to stump the country with lectures, challenging the adherents of other creeds, delving into their literature, and pouring contempt upon their inconsistencies with all the devices of logic, ridicule and profanity ; —and this forsooth in order to restore harmony, unity and love to a stupid and quarrelsome world !

These were the methods which he employed when, at the invitation of the local Arya Samaj, he descended upon the town of Akbarpur to deliver a couple of lectures on the true faith, in a large open space to which Muhammadans as well as Hindus were invited in the sacred cause of unity. True to the accepted policy of allowing freedom of speech, the authorities had permitted these lectures, after first taking guarantees from the local society that the language and hymns should be temperate. These guarantees were violated. Fired with fanatical zeal for his own superior and highly spiritual doctrine, Karma Gir spared no word or gesture offensive, profane and indecent, in pouring contempt upon Islam, which was the religion of many of his hearers. How ridiculous, he cried, were the accounts of God and creation given by Muhammadan divines and in the Qoran itself ! If Allah required the support of a heavenly throne, how could He be omnipotent ? If one hand clung to the Kaaba in Mecca, either His arm was abnormally long, or it was cut off and He was handless. Muslim commentaries discussed Him as possessed of a human body ; but clothes were too material to be contemplated, so presumably He was stark naked ! Also He must require food, and therefore servants, and have all sorts of unnameable needs and functions ; and, if He was

all-seeing, He must have eyes in all parts of His body ! And what of the heaven of Islam ! How unspiritual to think of it as dependent upon wine and women ; the Qoran, which held out such promises, must indeed be a contemptible book ! Whereupon the lecturer jerked and banged the holy volume about with disdain. As for creation, he ransacked Muhammadan literature for metaphors, which when torn from their contexts seemed to indicate the laughable theory that all things, including the Prophet himself, sprang from the sweat of a peacock—sweat no cleaner than this which the lecturer now dashed from his own forehead ! The morality too of Allah could not bear scrutiny, since He was the father of Jesus by a human woman ; and also since He had sent Satan into the world to tempt men to their damnation.

When later on Karma Gir was prosecuted for these blasphemies and insults, he scarcely denied them, and expressed no regret ; he claimed that they were justifiable as fair comment, justifiable forsooth because actuated by his high ideals of harmony and brotherly love. Of such stuff have been made the persecutors of all time. And yet what did Karma Gir see before him as he lectured ? Was it an audience touched to penitence, moved to tears for their wrong-headedness, humbly turning from a refuted Allah to the deity preferred by this youthful sciolist ? Alas for human prejudice ; it was something very different that he saw ! It was groups of scowling semitic faces, outraged Muhammadans feverishly clutching their cudgels and with difficulty removed out of earshot by the police—only to return again with itching ears ! Is it surprising that when the

meeting broke up at midnight, the Arya Samaj party returning home was set upon by Muhammadans in ambush, and clubbed into unconsciousness? The local hospital was full that night, full of groaning invalids, full of the police taking their depositions. Three of the reforming enthusiasts nearly lost their lives, and the rest were severely injured—all except Karma Gir himself who, being a coward as well as a holy man, hid his trembling limbs in an obscure bath-room!

And so this sanctimonious attempt to harmonise mankind led to a sensational riot case; which in turn led to such racial bitterness as had never before been known in a district hitherto remarkable for the friendly feelings prevailing between Hindu and Muhammadan. Lawyers and pressmen added fuel to the sectarian flame, and even the officials were accused of taking sides. Ten Muhammadans were eventually convicted and bound over, but their punishments were tempered to leniency because of the cruel provocation they were proved to have received. Then it was Karma Gir's turn, and he too was prosecuted for insult to religion and provocation of riot. His well-deserved conviction was appealed against, but upheld, all the way up to the High Court; and though his punishment was light enough (his callow youth being in his favour), his hopes of posing as a persecuted martyr were disappointed by the court's order binding him over to keep the peace. The fact is that though the Arya Samaj financed his defence and found the security demanded, they had no further use for a hot-head, who had not only involved them in trouble, expense and odium, but whose future utterances, owing to the bond furnished, would be destitute of sting and spice.

So Karma Gir, who really belonged to a cultivating family, returned sadly to his village, where he was received with suspicion and dislike. The simple rustic has a proverb :—

“ Read a little ; you are lost to the plough :

“ Read much ; you are lost to the home ” ;

and the discarded lecturer, though he had not really read much or to advantage, found himself in the latter category. Not only were his hands soft, and his habits unfitted for agriculture ; but his family and caste merely regarded him as an ex-convict, and an undesirable who was out of favour with the authorities. Bitterly realising that his mental equipment and theological learning would never be appreciated by mere farmers, he turned to the town ; and folded his hands to a low-bred pleader, who, though secretly disaffected, received a subvention from Government for keeping open an elementary school for boys of untouchable castes. Here Karma Gir drew a miserable pittance as a schoolmaster for the rest of his life, and spent his time teaching his pupils the principles of disloyalty to Government, racial hatred, and religious intolerance

“ *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum !* ”

INDIGO

"How beautifully your music is bound," I remarked to Newman as he finished singing.

"Yes," he replied, "Alec Hirst did them for me. Do you know him?"

"You mean the indigo planter in Shiupur district?"

"That's the man." Then after a pause. "There's rather a curious story about him, which I'll tell you if you promise not to pass it on."

I assented, and we lit long cheroots and made ourselves comfortable in easy cane chairs.

"Before the War," began Newman, "I was stationed in Shiupur, and once in the rains I had to go out thirty miles to enquire into a police scandal. When I had finished, Hirst, whose indigo factory at Hafizabad was only a little further away, invited me over for the week-end to make his acquaintance and see him making indigo. I arrived on Saturday afternoon in time for a game of tennis. Hirst was a first-rate player, and gave me fits then, though not afterwards. That racquet I lent you to-day was a present from him."

"A thundering good one, too," I murmured.

"Yes; what Alec Hirst did not know about tennis was not worth knowing. And though he lived absolutely alone in that remote, God-forsaken village, with fields stretching beyond his big garden on one side of the house and the dirty native village huddled beneath his factory on the other, he had a marker on the premises,

and kept up to his game almost to Wimbledon standard. After our match we went in to drink and bathe. As I entered first the huge verandah and then the house, Hirst seemed to notice nothing, but I was almost prostrated by an overwhelming, all-pervading smell. It seemed to come into you by all five senses ; it smarted in your eyes, it sang in your ears, it pressed upon your temples like the heat in the rains when the sun comes out and the wind drops ; you *felt* that stink ; you had almost to cut your way through it. " Good Heavens ! " I gasped. " What on earth is this smell ? " " What smell ? " asked Hirst in surprise ; " Oh, you mean the indigo ; that's nothing ; it's quite healthy ; I don't even notice it ; you'll soon get used to it." And sure enough, though for those two days I never lost consciousness of that rank, acrid odour, though I felt it in my bath, tasted it in my soup, and smoked it in my cheroots, it was not really disagreeable, and I had almost forgotten it when I left on Tuesday morning. That smell of indigo really seemed to be only part of the extraordinary remoteness of the whole place. There Hirst lived, miles from anywhere, surrounded by hundreds of acres of nothing but agriculture, separated from everyone and everything of his own kind, cultivating, buying, pressing, soaking, decomposing, aerating, testing, boiling, moulding, thinking, and smelling indigo, nothing but indigo. However, he had a fine old garden and a comfortable house, and I noticed in the drawing-room a magnificent German piano, as well as a fine show of tennis cups on a side table. While I was in the seclusion of my bath-room, I almost forgot the smell, but as I came into my bed-room, it rushed

at me as the east wind does when one turns the corner of a square at Home ; and, all unclothed as I was, it seemed to penetrate every pore of my body. As I dressed, I gazed out through the open door at the great factory, and was just thinking how typical it and its atmosphere were of that vast remoteness from everything civilised, when I heard coming from the drawing-room an amazing sound, or rather collection of sounds. It was the piano, and surely that was Beethoven ! I listened again ; it was the " Appassionata," and played with a master's touch. When the movement was over, I crept into the room, and heard Hirst finish the sonata. I had not heard such music since I came to India, and I begged him to go on. It was a treat I can tell you ; he went right through the " Pathetique " and the " Moonlight " and some of the symphonies, playing in regular platform style and without a score of any kind. After dinner I insisted on the " Appassionata " again, and then got him to talk about himself. He had been trained as an analytical chemist, chiefly in Germany, where he got first-rate music, and spent most of his spare time in learning the piano, while for exercise he played tennis, apparently in excellent company. He then got a job as chemist to a big indigo firm, which deputed him for two years to study the manufacture of the synthetic dye in Germany. Artificial indigo was then underselling natural all over the world, and the idea was that if improvements were made in the factories out here, natural indigo might be produced cheaper and get the market again. So Hirst spent two more years between the chemical laboratory, the tennis court and classical music. His piano teachers wanted him to take up the

platform as a profession, but he was already committed to indigo and India, and soon afterwards came out to Behar as chemical adviser to the planters. There he made a name as the best pianist and tennis-player in the province ; and his technical recommendations were also so sound that several moribund factories were set upon their legs again. As a reward for this, the firm gave him a half share in the Hafizabad concern, in the hope that this too might be resuscitated, though of course up-country indigo can never be of the same quality as the Behar stuff on account of the drier climate. Hirst was simply absorbed in this job when I first met him, working literally night as well as day ; for, as you probably know, in the making of indigo (what they call the *mahai*), there comes a critical moment when the steeping ought to stop and the vats be emptied ; and this moment, in some temperatures, comes at night. One of the nights I was at Hafizabad, Hirst got up at 2. a.m. to test the water and had to hang about for nearly an hour before he decided to empty. One day he showed me the whole process : there was the top tank of clean water (in which I had a delightful swim) ; then the tank next below, into which the indigo stalks were packed under heavy pressure from logs of wood, and then steeped in water for exactly the right number of hours, to extract the indican by fermentation ; then lowest of all was the aerating tank in which the dark blue indigo-laden water was constantly kept in motion and splashed into the air by a great circular fan or water-wheel, until sufficient nitrogen had been absorbed, and the indigo sank to the bottom as a kind of mud, while the waste water, now showing the economically

proper shade of yellowness, was drained off into the fields below as a fertiliser. Then the indigo was boiled, moulded, put into cakes, and stored on shelves in the long *godowns* ready for packing. Hirst was as keen as possible on all this, and was in fact beginning to make the factory pay, though the price in Calcutta was still very low. All this *mahai* work goes on of course in the season when the indigo crop is ready, that is from about June to October, and in the cold weather planters have very little to do. Most men would have envied him having time to loaf and shoot in our lovely bracing cold weather ; but Hirst said it did not suit him. Though his wife could not stand heat, and had to go to the Hills every summer, leaving him quite alone in the indigo season, he was always fit and happy when hard at work, and never felt lonely while he had a piano and a tennis court ; whereas in the winter he became fretful, slack, run-down and miserable. I did not think much of this at the time, seeing him so interested and keen ; but when I next saw him in February, the change was extraordinary. His wife and he came over to stay with me for the Shiupur " week," and I put his name down to play in the tennis tournament and a couple of concerts. But when he turned up, he looked wretched and would do nothing. He was always mooning restlessly about, opening and shutting the piano, poking about in the wires and hammers and pedals, and sorting volumes of music ; or else pottering with tennis racquets, measuring the court or putting the net up and down. But I could never get him to play more than a few chords or notes ; he would raise his face in a sort of enquiring, searching attitude, as if he missed something, and then shut the

piano and sit dejectedly. As for the concerts, he simply said he was too ill to go to them ; and indeed he looked it, and I had to make his apologies accordingly. When the tennis tournament came off, he tried to play, in fact he seemed anxious to play ; but it was a disappointing exhibition, and he scarcely hit a ball ; he seemed to be absently thinking of something else,—and utterly unable to concentrate. His wife said he generally got like this when he had no work to do, but she was puzzled and distressed, as she knew of nothing physically wrong with him. After the “ week ” she took him away on some visits and shoots ; but they did him no good ; and when his wife was starting for the Hills, she wrote asking me to look him up in the hot weather when he would be alone ; she added however that he had lately summoned up energy to tramp the villages looking at the growing indigo, and that this had brightened him up considerably.

The *mahai* season had begun again when I went to Hafizabad, in July. Again I was staggered by the monotonous isolation of the place, embodied as it were in that enveloping odour ; again I was pulverised at tennis, and again delighted with that wonderful music. For to my relief Hirst seemed to be quite himself again : he played Beethoven in a masterly fashion, saying that there were many kings of music but only one emperor. A second and a third visit I paid him that season, still finding him cheerful and jolly and interested ; and when I asked him to come with his wife to a party I was getting up for Christmas week, he accepted enthusiastically, declaring that he looked forward to more tennis and more classical music. But when Christmas came,

he was more languid and distrait than ever : he would talk of things and apparently wanted to do them, but when it came to execution, he fell to pieces. What was worse, his wife was very poorly, and they both left my Christmas party in bad health. The climax came when Mrs. Hirst died in March. Poor Hirst seemed utterly prostrated—nerves all to pieces—and I had him over to stay with me at Shiupur. I think the shock of losing his wife was aggravated by a touch of the sun from keeping his head uncovered too long at the funeral ; but anyhow his mental and physical states reacted on each other, and alarmed me, besides utterly baffling the Doctor Babu, who had no soul above aperients, bromides and sanatogen. At his previous visits, Hirst had at any rate eaten and slept well, though he did not smoke anything like as much as he did on his own factory. But now his appetite failed, he complained of bad nights, and the very smell of tobacco upset him. If he did nothing, he became miserable and despondent ; if he attempted anything continuous, he broke down and made a mess of it. My piano was rather out of order ; so he tried to tune and clean it and to replace some felts, but he only made things worse. These failures he chafed at ; for he had naturally a thorough, well-ordered mind, and hated things to be unfinished, untidy, or *kachcha* in any way. So the only thing was to devise little jobs connected with his special subjects to keep him employed. It was at this period that he bound all my music so beautifully ; but he never could do more than one song at a time : he would then wander off to repair the tennis ropes, or roll half the court, or put vaseline on the racquets ; or else

he would moodily turn over note-books about synthetic indigo, or volumes of Beethoven. And he slept very badly. Once at midnight I was awakened by a crash of discords on the piano, and rushed in to find Hirst half sprawling over the keys, with his tennis racquet on the floor buried in a disorder of classical music. He had stumbled half-conscious out of bed, groped his way instinctively to the piano, knocked over flower-pots and small tables as he went, fumbled amongst books, opened the instrument, tried to play, and then collapsed. After this I insisted on his going away for a change, and took him for a week or two to stay with a hospitable indigo planter. The *mahai* was going on, and the familiar, pungent odour surrounded us the moment we arrived. The next morning Hirst seemed a new man ; he had slept well, spent the forenoon nosing about the factory, eat a hearty breakfast, and then settled down to his beloved Beethoven, with half a dozen tennis sets to follow and cheroots for the rest of the evening. I left in a few days, and went back to my work at Shiupur, greatly relieved. But his rally was only temporary. When he followed me a fortnight later, he soon became haggard and listless again, and before long he scarcely left his bed, and talked and acted so erratically that I not only removed his razors, and revolver cartridges, but had a heart to heart talk with the Doctor Babu. This incompetent but worthy gentleman soon agreed that a second opinion was advisable, and I got him to wire for Colonel Burton, Civil Surgeon of Maheshganj. When Burton came he diagnosed violent reaction after some sort of stimulant, and suggested alcohol or dope. These, I assured him, were impossible ; for I had lived

with Hirst, and knew he touched no drugs and very little alcohol. Anyhow, the only remedy was immediate removal to the nursing home for mental cases in Kasauli. Then I had a nice little job with the station-master. When I asked for a reserved compartment to be drawn up on Shiupur siding and attached to the train connecting with the mail for the Hills, he turned over his dirty, dog-eared books and said there was no rule providing for such a "deeficultee." I said, "Look here, Babu sahib, that carriage will be at the siding at eight tomorrow morning. If it is not, I will break you. Wire to Maheshganj : I know the traffic superintendant there." This statement was inaccurate, and the threat was bluff : I had no idea how I could break a station-master who carried out his rules ; but an Oriental has a vivid fear of official power ; and this *babu* probably conjured up tortuous visions of criminal cases fabricated against him, or false complaints lodged, to result in his dismissal or at least banishment to a distant station with plenty of malaria and no perquisites. Anyhow, after I had put my requisition in the form of a command in writing, he sent off his wires, and the carriage was ready in time next morning. I shall never forget that day and night in that gasping furnace of a carriage. Hirst was in a bad way, and almost torpid with the heat. Even the dandy journey up the foot-hills was one long, blazing exercise of patience. However, I got him at last to Kasauli, made him over to the nursing home, and returned exhausted to Shiupur.

At the hospital in the Hills, Hirst not only regained a certain amount of physical and mental strength, but—what was better still—he recovered sufficient interest in life to make love to one of the nurses—a

brave, nice girl, whom he subsequently married after a trip home. Meantime I thought a lot about his mysterious ailment, and wondered whether there could be any permanent cure. Burton's hint about artificial stimulants, and Hirst's own peculiar way of lifting his face in a sort of vacant, unsatisfied expectancy, gave me a clue, and I formed a theory which you have perhaps already guessed. As a result I wrote Home to the head of the indigo firm, telling him in confidence all about Hirst, giving my opinions, and making definite suggestions. The firm, I am glad to say, agreed with me, all the more readily I expect because Germany was now out of the market on account of the War, and there was an enormous boom in natural indigo. They wanted to establish this prosperity firmly, not only by improvements in natural dye, but by mastering synthetic methods before German chemists begin to compete again. Anyhow, they saw Hirst, of whom they thought very highly, in London, paid all his expenses, and gave him a good spell of research work in their laboratories, before sending him out to India again. In the meanwhile they deputed an expert from Behar to carry out my proposals in Hafizabad ; and I also took the young lady into my confidence. When Hirst first landed in Bombay, he was met by his fiancée, who promptly married him, and brought him straight up-country. At Hafizabad he found, not only the factory in ordinary working order, but a fully-equipped laboratory for research into the chemical properties of artificial as well as natural indigo. This would give him the atmosphere of the work that he loved all the year round ; and he plunged into that atmosphere—and into that

odour—with all the keenness of a boy back for the holidays.

The solution was found. It was not rest and change that Hirst needed ; for he had got plenty of those when he came to Shiupur and was so ill there : it was not climate ; for he had always been well in the hot weather and run down in the cold : it was not company ; for he had been quite fit at Hafizabad, where he lived for months together in solitude : it was not work alone ; for he had been at his best at that other indigo planter's where he did nothing but loaf and amuse himself. What his nature, or the habits of half a lifetime, needed, was nothing more or less than the *smell* of indigo in the making. Without that smell he could not live, work, enjoy sport or company, or play music ; *with* it his health and reason were saved. It was that all-pervading smell and that alone, which restored Hirst to useful work, to happiness, to good-fellowship, to lawn-tennis, and (last but not least) to Beethoven."

RETRIBUTION

"It seems to me, Darogah ji," said Dobbs, "that you would like to turn every one of the Raja sahib's servants out of the palace!"

"That is true, Huzur," replied the sub-inspector of police; "they are all badmashes; but Ganpat Rao is the worst. Before he came, it was bad enough; but since the Raja sahib made him assistant *diwân* (minister), oppression of the poor, corruption within the palace, and concealment of crime have passed all bounds. The Raja sahib listens to Ganpat Rao in everything, so that he can do what he likes all over the estate; and if any outrage is reported, all evidence is suppressed by intimidation. Moreover, no woman is safe from him."

The speaker was a senior, military-looking officer, who had been specially put in charge of the difficult police station of Manota: as a Brahman he would command respect in this Rajput estate, while his excellent record and the approach of his pension made it unlikely that he would lend himself to the tortuous intrigues of the palace. Dobbs just pointed out that the Raja was an important man, who had to be treated with tact and conciliation; but promised to approach him gently on the subject of his minister's oppression and deceit. This he did, but without success; such suggestions had to be very delicate, as Ganpat Rao was a great favourite with the Raja; and very brief, as he was constantly in attendance.

This man was in fact a Mahratta of low caste, who made a peripatetic living as wrestler, athlete and juggler, and had come to Manota about a year before, hoping that his prowess as giant and acrobat would find favour in an old-fashioned native court. He succeeded more than he either deserved or expected. The Raja, indolent, effete, pleasure-loving, was fascinated by the adventurer's wrestling tricks, fancy shooting and feats of strength, and soon made him his private entertainer and attendant ; from which position he wormed himself into the great man's confidence, and before long became his assistant minister ; since the chief *diwân* himself was a lazy, good-humoured old person who never did any work whatever if he could leave it to other people, Ganpat Rao was now the most influential personage in the estate. Nor need Europeans sneer at this method of bestowing patronage as *oriental* ; for it is recorded of a certain Roman emperor, that in choosing his officers of state, he was guided chiefly by their "enormitate membrorum !"

After dinner next day Dobbs was yawning over his last cheroot after a weary but interesting day, when he was disturbed by a woman's wailing outside. The orderly was trying to quiet and get rid of her, but in vain : so, as it was a bitterly cold night, Dobbs allowed her to come inside the tent and squat on the carpet by the warm stove. "Mercy, justice, Huzur !" she cried, shaking with sobs. "What is it, mother ?" asked Dobbs, gently. She was perhaps ten years younger than he was, but she looked ten years older : so ageing is motherhood in India, so withering is widowhood, so shattering is shame ! For this young woman's story was

the cruel story (all too common in India) of a widow's fall, a widow's shame. "My baby is dead, my baby is murdered," she wept vociferously. "Tell me all about it," said Dobbs soothingly, "but speak quietly without crying, otherwise I cannot hear your words." A Hindu woman is not supposed to mention the name of the father of her children, and the story was haltingly told ; but at last the whole was elicited, including her paramour's indenture. A man from the palace had made secret love to her, a widow, with presents and promises : yes, a servant of the Raja's, at least he was now a servant, and an important one : he was called the "little *diwân*," but he was really a very big man, and she had yielded to his masterful wooing. For some time he was kind to her, and fed her well : but when he heard a child was to be born, he visited her less often and his love cooled. He even made unspeakable suggestions to her, in order to prevent exposure and scandal. But she would not listen to this, and a week ago a boy had been born. As soon as he heard this, he hurried round to see her at night, and urged her to save herself from disgrace ; to go with him at once ; to take the child and,—to get rid of him ! There was a deep wide well on the outskirts of the town,—a well in which the spring was so strong that the water sometimes overflowed and was never more than a foot or so below the surface of the ground ; there would be no splash, and no noise : and there was no moon. But mother-love was too strong, and she again refused, and he went away angry. Now early this morning she left the house for a few minutes to fetch water, and when she returned, the baby had disappeared. He must have been

murdered, she knew it, and she knew who had done it. And now she had not only lost her boy, but would be suspected of his murder. So she reported her sad story at the police station ; and the men had come and dragged the great well at her suggestion, and had pulled up the dead body of her baby. " Mercy, justice, Huzur," she moaned ; " the police will do nothing for me against the wishes of the Raja sahib." Dobbs sent her away with a few words of comfort, promising that the police should make faithful enquiry, and that he himself would look into it. As a matter of fact what he feared was, not that the police (under their chosen officer) would suppress the crime or extort money out of it, but that they would find no sufficient evidence against the murderer. And so it fell out. As soon as he took his seat next morning in court, his police reader came forward with a special report. " A *red envelope* has come from Manota station, Huzur," he said. A red envelope takes precedence of all other court business ; for it means a first report of a murder, dacoity, or other serious crime. So this paper was read out, and contained the substance of the woman's story of the night before. Investigation was promptly started, but the difficulty proved to be the paucity of evidence ; it was all circumstantial, and there was nothing direct against Ganpat Rao. The whole palace, and half the town, knew that he alone could have done the deed ; for none but he had the motive. But nothing could be proved except the neighbours' suspicions of the intrigue, based on Ganpat Rao's visits ; the fact of the birth ; the finding of the body in the well ; and some vague statements that the " little diwân " had left the palace—no unusual

thing of course—early that morning. Dobbs saw the Raja, explained that so heartless a murder ought not to go unpunished, and urged him to use his influence to get more palace evidence. But the Raja, though polite with expressions of sympathy and profuse with promises to do all he could in the course of justice, professed ignorance of the whole matter. The truth, of course, was that he wished to screen his favourite, and had no intention of doing anything except passively obstruct enquiry. Few in Manota, least of all the Raja himself, could understand why all this fuss should be made about the death of a baseborn infant: such living evidences of disgrace were utterly unwanted, and often enough mothers themselves got rid of them by conveniently dropping them into wells or mislaying them on the edges of tanks: this woman was after all only a widow, and was much better without an illegitimate baby, who could never grow up to be any good or credit to anyone. How much more satisfactory to let the scandal fade away naturally. But Dobbs was full of British ideas about justice and the sanctity of human life. He insisted on Ganpat Rao's arrest and trial. When even the sub-inspector hinted that the evidence was insufficient for a court, and that a prosecution without a conviction would be a blot on the annual statistics by which police work is too often judged, the Collector would not yield. If the Raja would not co-operate, he maintained, at least the officials should make a stand for justice; and if people were made uncomfortable, all the better; they *ought* to be made uncomfortable, if they tolerated and condoned murder. So Dobbs deliberately rode for a fall, and not only

refused to withdraw the prosecution, but saw to it that the magistrate committed Ganpat Rao, still under arrest, for trial in the Judge's court. Here the expected acquittal took place ; but Manota had at least seen that the Collector meant business ; and the Raja, who had a keen nose for official favour as well as a dislike for undignified scandals, replaced Ganpat Rao as minister, and gave him a long holiday after his acquittal.

.

The War had been going on for some months ; and there was a great demand for Indian soldiers. Dobbs' district was well-known for its stout Rajputs, and recruiting was going on vigorously, a special staff official and unofficial having been put on for the work. Manota had done pretty well, but the Dharmpur Raj, fifty miles away to the north, was very backward, though it was full of Rajputs. A young civilian on military duty was touring that area, and wrote to Dobbs that though the material was splendid, the results were disappointing, there being among the rustics an unaccountable reluctance to enlist. Dobbs promptly went north, and joined the recruiting parties. He found an uneasy feeling of apathy and suspiciousness in the villages, which seemed strangely devoid of young men whenever the officials arrived. Once or twice when they went to a cattle or horse fair, they found an abnormally small attendance, and the few that were there were chiefly women, children and old men. Dobbs was reminded of an occasion long ago when he had gone with the Civil Surgeon to assist and disinfect a plague-stricken village, and had found that the whole of the residents,

scared by sinister rumours, had completely though temporarily vanished in panic, leaving the hamlet deserted except for a few invalids. Here too in Dharmpur estate evil rumour had been busy : the Germans, it was whispered, had reached Afghanistan, had already mastered that country, and were advancing to defeat the British in the passes leading to India ; war-ships had bombarded Bombay and Madras and destroyed the bazars and mills ; aeroplanes (in reality British but believed to be hostile) had been seen threatening from the sky ; English soldiers, already greatly reduced in numbers, were being drafted away to defend their own country, and Indians were being recruited in their place to meet the German invasion and feed the German guns ; worst of all, the Brahmans were pessimistic, the stars and planets were of ill omen, and astrologers were prophesying disaster. Stories were told of young men defying these rumours and offering to join up ; but (it was said) they were deterred by their credulous women-folk, who seized them frantically, threatening to jump down the nearest wells if their natural protectors deserted them. Dobbs soon found that mere official contradiction of these falsehoods was useless. Indian loyalty depends upon the stability of the Government, and if this is suspected, inspired denials, however widespread, will not be credited. It was therefore imperative to trace these rumours to their source and there to scotch them. But the police seemed to be ignorant of the mischief makers ; they were either in the dark or in the conspiracy. So the steadying co-operation of influential non-officials was necessary, and the most important of these was the Raja of Dharmpur, who

carried enormous weight among his fellow Rajputs. This potentate, Dobbs felt, ought to have produced far more recruits than he had, and might be expected to allay the growing panic, especially as he was understood to be running for a title, and even for an honorary lieutenancy. So the Collector arranged for an interview with the Raja, who himself fetched him in state to his pretentious palace. He was a first-rate whip with an unrivalled stable, and they drove in an imposing coach, ten-in-hand at a fast trot, through the narrow streets of the wondering city, clattered down the stone-paved decline to the bridge over the moat, and cantered up the tortuous corkscrew drive beyond to the great iron-studded inner gates. Here, after the usual ceremonial preliminaries, which Dobbs endured with solemn but anxious patience, he had a straight talk with the Raja, using arguments directed to his distinguished military traditions, his well-known loyalty to the British Raj, and his own ambitions. After many evasions, the great man admitted that recruiting was languishing, that the reason for this was the prevalence of sinister rumours amongst a credulous peasantry, and that at the bottom of these was a handful of mischief makers who were working in the dark, secretly, cunningly, maliciously. He thought he knew the ringleader, and was ready to meet craft with craft in order to catch him in the act of disseminating his wicked, German-paid propaganda. The man he suspected was a new-comer from the south, who called himself Pandit Ji and wore the sacred thread, but the Raja believed that he was in reality anything but a Brahman. "His complexion is much too dark, Sahib; for all true Brahmans are

of wheat-colour. The Sahib doubtless knows the Hindu proverb :—

Kâla Brahman, Gora Châmar,
Unke sang na utere pâr.

(Dark Brahman, pale Châmar,
With these one will never cross *sc.* the stream).

This man is going round the villages, showing feats of strength, of wrestling and of archery, and then deceiving the people with lies. He has sought an interview with myself, to show his tricks and I suppose to have audience ; perhaps he thinks he can corrupt my loyalty also."

Dobbs and the Raja then agreed that the interview solicited should be granted, and should be unobtrusively attended by a police detective, who would dress and behave as one of the Raja's *chobdârs* (mace-holders) and would make shorthand notes of the " Pandit Ji's " conversation. This plan was successful. The adventurer appeared, showed off the best of his athletic and juggling feats, and was then received in audience. After much circumlocution and not without judicious encouragement, he filled the Raja's ears (and incidentally the detective's) with all the wild treacherous falsehoods with which he had deluded the villages into something like panic ; and he ended by a definite offer to the Raja of German gold. The Germans, he said, must inevitably conquer India, now bled white of troops, nay, were already conquering ; and when they were masters, they would show high favour to chieftains who had discouraged recruiting for the British and turned the military classes against them.

Two minutes after " Pandit Ji " had left the audience chamber he was under arrest, and twenty minutes later he was standing handcuffed before Dobbs, who was scarcely surprised to recognise in him his Manota friend, Ganpat Rao. In a couple of days he had been committed by the magistrate for trial, and within a month he had been convicted of sedition by the Judge. The evidence was complete ; the Raja, though usually exempt from appearing in court, consented to become a witness, and fully corroborated the detective's account taken from his shorthand notes ; while his example was followed by numerous eye-witnesses from the palace and the estate, who now came forward readily to attest the persuasive insinuations and treacheries they had heard from the criminal's lips. Ganpat Rao, athlete, filibusterer, seducer of women, murderer of infants, pseudo-Brahman, conspirator, was sentenced to transportation for life for attempting to wage war against the King-Emperor.

The remaining mischief-makers soon vanished, or were firmly bound over to be of good behaviour, everyone being now anxious to discredit them and to show his own loyalty to the British Government. The Raja, having put his hand to the plough, did not look back, but took the lead in a successful recruiting campaign. Enlistments all over the north of Dobb's district went up by leaps and bounds, and the Dharmpur subdivision won the provincial shield for its percentage of Rajputs with the colours.

The Raja of Dharmpur himself became an Honorary Lieutenant and a C.S.I. ; but he of Manota died without a title. To the end of his life the latter could never

understand the curious jurisprudence of the British. Why, he wondered, did they seek a man's life when he did no more than get rid of an illegitimate child, and spare it when he plotted to overthrow the Emperor of India ? In the good old days the former little affair would have been quietly ignored ; but the latter would have been promptly, terribly and without trial punished by torture, by flaying alive, or by hurling a dismembered body from the lofty bastions of the fort to the gaping crocodiles in the river or the trampling elephants in the moat.

THE LADY-DOCTOR

A portrait in seven positions.

Position 1 : full figure.

When I was first posted to Aminabad, I was requested by a Parsi philanthropist with a long name to keep a friendly eye on the hospital for women which he had founded and partially endowed in that small station; with even more earnestness he begged me to be particular about the spelling of his name, since the hospital was called after his late wife; he desired me to eschew the official or Hunterian spelling of which the Government made a fetish, and, in correspondence about himself or his hospital, to adhere to the spelling which his family had always adopted. Promising to do my best to meet his wishes, I took an early opportunity of inspecting the women's hospital, which, though founded by the Parsi's charity, was administered under official auspices and largely from local funds. It was a compact building with neat compound and outhouses, but the attendance of patients was very poor. The post of lady-doctor in charge carried with it small pay and few amenities, and its successive occupants, regarding it as a stepping-stone to better things, did their daily work perfunctorily and without enthusiasm. Indian women require much coaxing to submit themselves to medical examination, and are shy of long journeys to public places. It was an ordeal for a suffer-

ing girl or anxious mother to tramp or even drive along the crowded grand trunk road past imposing houses, shops and official buildings to the women's hospital ; while, if they sent for the lady-doctor to their homes, they had to pay five Rupees a visit,—a fee which she was perfectly entitled to charge for private practice, but which was somewhat deterrent in a country which expects all medical relief to be free. The lady-doctors were for the most part animated by a strict sense of duty, than which there are few better qualities in human nature. There is however at least one finer thing ; and that, *pace* the Secretariat, is not orthography. It is selfless loving sacrifice in the service of others. Probably no nature actuated by this impulse, and this alone, had swum into the ken of the female sufferers of Aminabad till the coming of Doctor Crozier. This lady was a Canadian missionary, sent out by her society to the women of India, with funds which were at first sufficient for only humble beginnings. When I first saw her, she was dispensing medicines to a handful of sick mothers and children in the tiled verandah of a small hired mud shanty, in the middle of a congested quarter. She had with her only a couple of servants, with a tiny dog-cart waiting in the sun outside ; but her patients were already crowding hopefully upon her ; and when I passed again a week later, they had grown much more numerous, and looked confident and eager. Though Miss Crozier is my heroine—perhaps I should say *since* she is my heroine—I shall not attempt to describe her person ; but the love in her grey eyes and the tender pity in her voice and touch would have won Diogenes himself, disarming all questions as to age,

stature or comeliness. Even of her Divine Master Isaiah foretold that "there is no beauty that we should desire him": and Homer never essayed to enumerate the features of the most beautiful woman of antiquity; he was content to indicate the overwhelming effect which her appearance had upon the grey-beards of the city which had been ruined by her fatal charms. In outstanding characters it is not the detail that counts; it is the personality as a whole, the soul revealing itself in word and action. As a jewel is judged from the combined effect of all its facets, so my portrait, though viewed in various aspects, must be appreciated from the influence that it shed, and the impress that it left, upon its surroundings.

The new lady-doctor told me that she was contemplating larger quarters; and in less than a month she had leased and occupied a roomy house on the outskirts of the town, and had gathered round her a considerable staff to cope with the growing multitude of old and new patients. Soon a school was started in an outhouse, and this was filled with children from the city, while the once dismal compound was already bright with flowers and shrubs transplanted from the Collector's garden. No fees were taken, and medicine was given free; but thankofferings were invited to assist the upkeep of the hospital, and small sums were often given by grateful patients who would have grudged having to pay a regular price for drugs or fee for attendance. The dispensary was spotlessly clean, but antiquated and dilapidated, and there was insufficient accommodation for the numerous invalids who were clamouring for admission as in-patients. And yet all

this while the well-built, whitewashed wards of the official hospital were almost empty ! Dr. Crozier now wrote to her supporters in Canada, who evidently appreciated good work when they saw it ; for they allotted sufficient funds to build and equip a spacious new hospital, complete with long airy wards, operating room with marble walls and north light, and residences for doctors and nurses. The work was now expanding daily, qualified assistants were sent from Canada, and a generation of native girls was growing up, trained to follow, however haltingly, both the medical skill and the self-sacrificing devotion of their beloved pioneer. There was a little delay in acquiring the necessary land, owing to the prejudices of a few obscurantist proprietors, who in the new departure saw, or pretended to see, an attempt to proselytize the nation through its women and children ; but public opinion overcame this difficulty ; and Dr. Crozier was also fortunate in the character of her building contractor ; honesty in men of that profession is not common in India, but I think the most depraved of contractors must have been shamed into integrity by the transparent unselfishness and single-mindedness of the lady-doctor. The foundation stone was soon laid by the Collector's wife, and before long the whole big compound was a seething mass of masons and carpenters, to say nothing of gardeners and road-makers. Sloth or inefficiency seemed unable to live in that atmosphere of loving energy and sincere purpose whose nucleus and inspiration centred in Dr. Crozier. Within two years of her arrival in Aminabad the stately new institution was open, and from that moment onwards its doors were never closed,

its wards and dispensing rooms never empty. Before the world stood the full stature of the figure of the lady-doctor.

Position 2 : right profile.

Besides the full face, other expressions no less gracious were visible to those that had eyes to see and opportunity to explore. Once on my rounds through the bazars I caught sight of her right profile. It was early morning, and she was coming out of a humble dwelling, where a babe had been born in the night after a long and difficult confinement. She looked haggard and physically spent, but there was no mistaking the thankful triumph in her eyes. As she walked home, little children in the gutters hailed the " Doctor Miss sahib " with cries of delight, and she stooped and spoke to them by name. For she was known and welcomed all over the city, and her errands of healing and mercy were constant. Fatigue she never admitted to, and no hour was too late, or too early, if there was suffering to be relieved. Women who never went beyond their stifling courtyards were taught the elements of the hygiene and diet suited to their unnatural lives. Digestions half ruined by sloth and seclusion, eyes nearly lost through life-long neglect, lungs made tubercular by the stale air of the *zanana*, skin torments fostered by insanitary habits and surroundings, were skilfully treated ; and while pain was alleviated, its avoidable causes were rebuked. Open sores, heretofore plastered over with mud, ashes and cowdung, were now washed and bandaged with antiseptics. Perhaps

in all this great country of sadness there is nothing sadder than the unnecessary waste of infant life which occurs at or after child-birth. Brahmanism and long custom enjoin ceremonial observances of the most appalling description ; and while the poor mother is put to the extremity of risk and discomfort, the new young life is sapped and enfeebled at its source. European men know much and guess more, but stand helpless before the sanctity of the Indian home, the inviolability of the Indian *parda*. The problem can be touched only on its fringe and only by a few devoted women, and not even by them till the confidence of the people has been won, and the barrier of conservatism broken down, by a long probation of patience. In this struggle Dr. Crozier was a protagonist, winning her way by that gentle faith, that indomitable hope, that transparent love. I have said that the women of Aminabad had little previous experience of such a character. Charity they knew ; it acquired great merit and was bestowed often on the undeserving : devotion to duty they knew ; it was embodied in a long succession of public servants and sometimes others : hard work they knew ; it was the daily portion of many of them. But a life given to the loving service of others was a new phenomenon, and it won their hearts.

Position 3 : left profile.

As the lady-doctor's work grew under her hand, she was not content with the limits of the town. In the villages too there were problems, there was suffering ; and soon after the main hospital was full, indeed

overcrowded, she established three or four dispensaries in outlying parts, with a small army of assistants, nurses and compounders. In order to visit these and to spread her activities all over the district, she bought a small motor-car, which she drove herself, with the devoted assistance of a native youth whom she had cured of a painful malady believed by him to be irremediable. Sometimes she would take me on her long road-journeys, and it was then that I saw her left profile. Her days for certain routes were known, and every few miles the car would be stopped by a group of villagers, whom she treated on the spot, renewing medicines and bandages, diagnosing new cases, and even performing small operations by the wayside. At her branch dispensaries she would find her assistants surrounded by patients, and after a hasty lunch would have time only for such as had baffled the local staff. Efficiency, cleanliness and gentleness—no common qualities in medical subordinates in India—were her constant care, and the registers, as well as the grateful patients themselves, were a proof of successful treatment. Then back she would motor by another road to Aminabad, attending to her own engine if it broke down, and in the evening had her big hospital to go round, with perhaps some city work at night.

Position 4 : smiling.

On rare occasions Miss Crozier took a few hours off, and went to tea with the Collector, his wife and his little boy. Sometimes she joined us in a game of badminton in the big shady garden ; more often, with

characteristic happiness in the joy of others, she took little Eddie in her dog-cart and let him hold the reins of the diminutive pony in his tiny hands ; or later on he would sit on her knee in the car with his fingers on the steering wheel. But what she liked best was to sit beneath the shadow of the cool moist fern-house, looking across the green lawn at the hibiscus hedge or the feathery avenue of gold *mohur* trees with their flaming blossoms, talking quietly to her friends and resting—just resting. From the cries of pain, from the stench of antiseptics, from the sordid sights of the bazar, she sought refuge in this peaceful garden, and drank in the solace of the old mango trees and tamarinds. To a family party already happy she brought an added cheerfulness, an unquenchable optimism ; for in the atmosphere she breathed there could be no melancholy. Little Eddie, with the infallible instinct of five years old, loved her dearly ; and in his babbling dialect her name became “ Doctor Rosy,” —a title of affection which was instantly adopted by the whole family circle, and grew to be a bond of mutual sympathy and reminiscence. To this day no other name is used by those friends when they think or speak of Doctor Crozier, and no other name is written in the correspondence between them. To the lady-doctor resting in the fragrant shade, the child’s prattle and pranks seemed to be an emblem of the eternal charm of budding undeveloped life ; while his mother’s gentle companionship refreshed her strenuous life with that quiet understanding and inspiration, for which even the strongest natures crave. As her character was, she beamed contentment, she radiated happiness. Even when the black cloud

descended upon the big house, and the little man, with the suddenness so alarming in the tropics, became dangerously ill, her smile never failed. Spontaneously, without a murmur at time lost or rest forfeited, she brought over a few things, and sat up the whole of four nights with the fever-stricken child. And she had her reward, when with the elasticity of youth he sprang back again to health and vigour.

Position 5 : frowning.

Only one thing could make her frown, and that was ingratitude, which is not nearly so uncommon in emotional India as it is popularly supposed to be. As so often is the case, her poorer patients proved more grateful than the richer. Possession of power, wealth, race and position sometimes breeds arrogance, and with arrogance an unworthy contempt for those who lack such advantages. Once only did I see a frown on Doctor Crozier's face, and even then it disappeared after a few cheery words. It was when the sun was gathering strength, and she was rocking wearily on a slow, clumsy elephant half way between the railway and the lordly palace of the Raja of Bahadurpur. The road was sixteen miles long, and one of the worst in the district, the Raja being too stingy to contribute to its decent repair. She had spent the evening and night at the palace, operating upon his invalid wife, had received no proper comforts there, had bumped eight miles along that atrocious road, and had another eight to go. I knew that huge awkward tusker ; it was the Raja's third best elephant, and the pad on its back was hard and

cushionless. Why couldn't he give her that fast, comfortable young female, I thought. I walked with the lady-doctor a little and asked her a few questions. Had she had any food? She would admit only to what she had taken with her the night before, and a cup of tea in the morning before dawn. I knew that tea—miserable washy stuff. But what the lady felt was not so much her own discomfort, as the poor light supplied for the operation and the off-hand manner in which she had been served; it had been so difficult, she said, to get from the servants the things she needed to make the case a success and relieve the poor Rani. I asked delicately about her fee, and she named a sum so low as to enrage me.

This was not the only occasion when Miss Crozier's friends had to interfere in her own interests, and to prevent her kind-heartedness from being imposed upon; but it was the worst in my experience. I informed the Collector, who lost no time in talking pretty straight to the Raja. The latter had supposed that the fact that the doctor was a woman without official position was a reason for treating her with humiliation and discourtesy; but he soon understood that the very opposite was the case, and that the lady-doctor who spent her life doing good, was not a menial to be ordered in attendance on a Rani and then sent away in discomfort with a miserably low fee. A letter of apology and gratitude, accompanied by a large donation to the hospital, soon reached Dr. Crozier, who, so far from cherishing resentment, had by this time almost forgotten the trials of that night, and who accepted the subscription as a wind-fall, regarding it as a spontaneous act of gratitude.

I did not undeceive her, but I did my best thereafter to reduce to a minimum anything which might provoke a frown (however temporary) on that serene face.

Position 6 : stooping.

There was cholera in the city. Perhaps nothing brings home more grimly to the human breast the imminent terror of death, the palpitating uncertainty of life, than does cholera, "the pestilence that walketh in darkness." But yesterday it was far away; to-day it is in our midst: yesterday our friend was in the full pride of healthy youth; this evening they are taking his body to the Ganges. In Aminabad it first attacked one obscure quarter, and we thought we had banished it by disinfecting wells, supervising meat and milk shops, and segregating the victims: but in two days it reappeared a mile away; and for a month it evaded our utmost efforts by dodging from place to place and filling everyone with panic. Hospitals were full, assistants hastened about with disinfectants and cholera pills, burying grounds and burning-*ghâts* were busy. It was nearly noon one scorching morning, when I passed Dr. Crozier's hospital on my way back to breakfast; and in the verandah shimmering with heat I saw a row of prostrate figures. Over one the lady-doctor was stooping, too busy to look up as I entered. Take a cholera case in time, and it will probably recover: but who can compete with an enemy that wins the race of death in a few short hours? So she was working against time, herself specialising in the early injections, which could cure, and leaving to her assistants the later palliatives which

could only alleviate. It was no occasion for conversation ; so with another glance at that earnest figure, stooping, clad in white but with arms bared to the elbows, I rode home.

Midway between the railway-station and the town was a shabby suburb, a focus of infection, which we determined to evacuate. Tents were put up at a safe distance for the refugees, before we proceeded to dismantle and cleanse by fire those insanitary hovels. With us went the Indian owner who, while consenting to these measures, took care to drive hastily along the road and remain at a distance, while we made sure that no one living remained. Relatives were carrying off one dead body as we worked, and there was one girl mortally stricken, who had to be lifted and conveyed away to die elsewhere. To this dreadful task the lady-doctor stooped with the rest, cheerful and fearless as ever ; for well she knew that there is no prophylactic like a stout and confident heart. The suburb was burnt to ashes, the focus was destroyed, the wind blew, the rain came, the temperature fell, the cholera season was over. But till all the infected were cured or buried, Dr. Crozier seemed to be for ever stooping over the sick or the dying.

Position 7 : back view.

The Bombay mail had left the station and I watched it out of sight. Dr. Crozier was in it, on her way back to Canada, and that was the last time I saw her. The station was thronged ; for there was scarcely a man, woman or child in Aminabad, who had not in the past

seven years received some benefit or at least kindness for which to bless her. The platform was wet with tears, and strewn with petals from the garlands and flowers with which the grateful crowd had pelted her carriage. Outside was a serried tangle of the nondescript curtained vehicles, in which women who had never before left their houses, had ridden in their hundreds to see the last of their beloved lady-doctor on her way to the far country. But she would return in a year or two ; for this was leave, not retirement ; and indeed it was characteristic of Dr. Crozier that even now, after seven blazing summers, she would not have taken her much-needed holiday, had not her aged parents urgently required her to smooth their dying pillows.

As I drove home past her hospital, I reflected whether that spacious fabric or the weeping crowd at the station should be considered the more enduring memorial of the lady-doctor's work for India ; and I recalled the words written over the north door of St Paul's cathedral :—

“ Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.”

“ THE SUCCESSOR TO THE PROPHET ”

“ Oh ! *Khalîfa Ji* ” bellowed Cox’s orderly from half-way down the bazar ; but there was no answer.

Let no reader be alarmed, or throw this sketch aside under the mistaken idea that it is an essay on the serious and thorny subject of the Khilâfat in Turkey. It is true that *Khalîfa* means “ Successor to the Prophet ; ” but in domestic and shopkeeping parlance in India it also means a native tailor or *darzi*. He is so nicknamed on the principle of euphemism, according to which disagreeable occupations are dignified with honorific and high-sounding titles. Thus in ancient Greece the dreaded Furies were (as it were) propitiated by calling them *Eumenides*, or Kindly Ones ; and thus in modern India a sweeper is dubbed *Mehtar*, or Ruler, and a water-carrier *Bhishti*, or Inhabitant of Paradise, while various menials are saluted as *Jamadâr*, or Commander of a company. And so when Cox sent his orderly into the bazar early one morning to fetch back Elahi Baksh, his wife’s old *darzi*, the orderly went to the tailor’s shop and shouted “ Oh ! Khalîfa Ji.” There was a clattering of sewing machines in the verandah, and Elahi Baksh himself was bending over his work in some dark recess inside, so perhaps he did not hear ; or if he heard, he pretended not to. But the official messenger was not to be denied, and at his third or fourth shout Elahi Baksh came reluctantly out, stooping under the cramped door-

way and peering over his spectacles at this unwelcome summons.

“ Ji ? ” he replied sulkily.

“ Cockus Sahib has sent for you,” said the orderly curtly.

“ What for ? ”

“ To work for the Memsahib, and return to her service.”

“ But I am now the servant of Broadrug (Broderick) Memsahib, and I go to her house at ten daily.”

“ That is no business of mine. Cockus Sahib calls you, and you are going with me to see him. It is an order.”

Elahi Baksh meekly but unwillingly followed the swaggering orderly to civil lines. In his blood was the legacy of generations of serfdom, and, though he had a keen eye to the main chance, he had none for a quarrel. He was an experienced tailor, and had worked satisfactorily in Mrs. Cox’s verandah for several years, rising in pay from fourteen to twenty Rupees a month. When Mrs. Cox went this last summer to the Hills for three months, she lent his services to Mrs. Broderick ; who was so pleased with him that she offered to raise his pay to twenty-three Rupees, if he would stay on with her instead of returning to Mrs. Cox on the latter’s return from her holiday. He consented ; for the extra three Rupees were after all three Rupees, and the work also was lighter and less closely supervised with the new mistress than with the old. His absence annoyed Mrs. Cox, who sent repeated messages and enquiries to her old servant. These Elahi Baksh had hitherto managed to evade ; but he dare not disobey the personal and rather menacing summons of the orderly. For

Cox was a magistrate, though a subordinate one ; and it was always possible that a man might find himself involved in some case in his court.

Timidly following the orderly he came up to Cox, who was standing on his verandah plinth,—a small man, but looking rather fierce with a hunting crop in his hand.

"Why have you not come back to the Memsahib's service ? " he asked sternly.

"I received discharge before the rains, Huzur, and then took employment with Broadrug Memsahib."

"No discharge was given : you were lent in *sipurdagi* (trust) to the other Memsahib for three months ; now you must come back to your old service."

"But I have now made bargain with Broadrug Memsahib, who pays me twenty-three Rupees : and as for *sipurdagi*, this was not said to me when Cockus Memsahib went to the Hills."

"*Sipurdagi* was clearly explained," retorted Cox ; "and yet for three Rupees you now desert the mistress whose salt you have eaten for five years ! "

"I have eaten much salt of the Huzur's, it is true : but I have also had much work and hardship. I am a poor man, with many to feed, and three extra Rupees are much help. Moreover at Broadrug Memsahib's I have sufficient leisure to eat food and drink water, and am allowed to go home sharp at five in the evening, instead of working in the dinner-hour and up till six as I did here."

This was said with a touch of impertinence ; and Mrs. Cox, who had been listening at the open door, now burst in angrily :—

"Bertie, how can you let him tell those horrid lies ?

Will you allow him to insult your wife? He is an ungrateful insolent brute, after all the wages and presents I have given him for five years."

Bertie was uxorious and afraid of his wife, as well as hot-tempered. So he hastily seized Elahi Baksh, gave him a light blow or two with his hunting-crop, and hustled him roughly down the steps. He then hurried indoors, fearing that his anger would get the better of him; while the *darzi*, who was not really hurt but had been humiliated before other servants, made good his escape, and soon put in a belated appearance before Mrs Broderick, looking woe-begone and rather disheveled. To his mistress's questions he whined that he had been grossly abused and severely thrashed in the presence of sweepers and other untouchable castes—and all because he was loyal to his new employer. Cockus Sahib, he said, was a violent man, and a poor servant must seek protection and redress. Mrs. Broderick allowed herself to boil with indignation, and gave Elahi Baksh leave to go to court and file a complaint against Cox. This was a tactless and unfriendly action; but she yielded to the temptation all the more readily, because her own conscience was pricking her and telling her that she had been rather mean to beguile the *darzi* from his old mistress with the bribe of a higher wage. She was much better off than Mrs. Cox, and that made it all the worse. Of course it was a free country, and Mrs. Cox had not paid the man any retaining fee in her absence; but something vague *had* been said about a loan and *sipurdagi*, and anyhow it was hardly the right thing to steal another lady's servants. At this point the quarrel could easily have been composed with a

little give and take on each side ; but neither mistress was very well-bred, and neither would yield : and as soon as the *Khalîfa* had formally lodged his complaint, the story became public property ; and though the Collector took up the matter with the husbands and his wife with the ladies, the latter hardened their hearts and refused to meet each other or to be reconciled.

The feud thus started lasted for many months, and ruined the harmony of the small station. Henceforth the Coxes and the Brodericks could not be asked to the same party ; and if they happened to meet at the club, they would not cut into the same rubber or tennis set or game of snookers. After a while the husbands, at first shyly and unknown to their wives, later with more confidence and with the ladies' unwilling consent, agreed tacitly to ignore the subject, and met with reasonable cordiality, on the neutral grounds of official dealings and games at the club. When the Indian Defence Force was formed in the War, Cox even drilled as a trooper under the command of Broderick, who was a lieutenant in the Light Horse ; and the two men became quite friendly over this common interest. But the wives kept severely to their respective houses, avoiding the club, and never calling on each other, though they exchanged visits with the three or four other houses in the station.

It was over a year after the rupture when Bailie, a bachelor between 30 and 40, was posted to the station ; and after a single round of calls he knew all the petty gossip of the European community. Mrs. Broderick, he found was called "The Bee," because she always signed herself "Bee Broderick" or "B.B.," and she

had a round figure, with a sort of buzz or purr in her speech. It was perhaps rather natural for Mrs. Cox, in contradistinction, to be nicknamed “The Wasp;” for she was slight, sinuous and sharp-featured, and she affected yellow costumes which she caught in with a black belt round a slender waist of which she was very proud. Moreover there could be no doubt about the *sting* in the conversation of both ladies. Having a sense of humour, Bailie was inclined to laugh at the continuance of this ridiculous quarrel; but he nearly burnt his fingers with both parties when he tried his hand at reconciliation. The preposterousness of the situation came home to him, when the leave season arrived in the hot weather (two years after Mrs. Cox’s fateful journey to the Hills), and he found himself (so far as European society was concerned) alone in the station with the Coxes and the Brodericks. He was sociably inclined after his daily work, and was on excellent terms with both ladies; but neither would go to the club for fear of meeting the other, and whenever Bailie went to that institution, he had to play a single with the marker. So he began to call at the two houses on alternate afternoons. Mrs. Cox would say:—“We missed you yesterday evening, Mr. Bailie.”

“Oh! yes,” he replied; “I was calling.”

This could only be on one lady; so Mrs. Cox asked acidly:—“And how is old Mrs. Broderick? Her house and garden were looking very untidy the other day when I went past, in spite of her crowd of pampered servants. Has she still got Elahi Baksh the *darzi*?”

“Oh no,” said Bailie; “he went back to do contract work in the bazar months ago.”

"Ah!" quoth Mrs. Cox. "I thought she would not keep him long. I used to employ him, but I let him go, as he was an insolent wretch, though a good worker. I would not have him back again now at any price!"

"Could not that old affair be forgotten now," Bailie would ask.

"I shall never meet that woman again until she apologises. She told the Collector's wife that I was a liar."

Next day Bailie would visit Mrs. Broderick, who greeted him warmly with:—

"What a pity you did not drop in yesterday, Mr. Bailie. One of my husband's assistants was here for the night, and we might have had a rubber."

"Sorry. I was calling."

This could only be on one lady; so Mrs. Broderick droned in a pitying sing-song:—

"And how is poor Mrs. Cox? She was looking very dowdy in that old yellow dress last time we drove past her house. I hear she cannot keep a single decent servant, as she loses her temper with them all. Has her husband been thrashing any more of them lately? He beat that old *darzi* of mine within an inch of his life."

"Could not that old affair be forgotten now," Bailie would ask.

"I am quite ready to see her here, if she likes to come: but she is so touchy and makes mountains of molehills. I hear that even the Collector's wife hardly ever sees her now. Poor thing! she must be very lonely."

And so on. Such are the interests of small minds; such the conversations of tiny stations!

Broderick was stout and asthmatic, and the Hills

did not suit him. Nevertheless when he grew apoplectic and breathless next hot weather, he had to go somewhere to get cool. So he took a month's leave to the Hills, where he got worse. In alarm his wife, knowing that the attenuated air of 7,000 feet was bad for him, put him into a dandy, and they started sadly homewards.

Before he had come 500 feet down on the winding hill road, he gave a gasp and expired on the spot in the dandy. His poor widow returned to their home, and began selling off their stock and furniture before leaving for good and joining her own people. This touch of human grief nearly made Mrs. Cox relent. She went so far as to leave a card of condolence,—at the same time taking the opportunity of inspecting the property for sale with a view to economical purchase. When the list of the things came round, she even condescended to discuss the possibility of buying. "I think we might buy those rugs, my dear," suggested her husband; "it will help the poor woman, and I hear she is left very badly off."

"Yes, Bertie," quoth Mrs. Cox; "her people are not much either, and she will find a great change after all that extravagance in the past. We might buy in a few things: but those rugs are not worth the price she asks; they are all in holes, as I saw when I left our cards; they will go cheaper if we wait till the auction." However, they agreed to put their names down at the prices quoted for some plants, some small chairs, and a tea-set which Mrs. Cox greatly coveted; and as for the rugs, which she had also set her heart upon though she pretended to disparage them, the bidding at the auction

proved to be so brisk that these and other articles were eventually knocked down to Cox at prices higher than those originally asked. However, all the things bought by the Coxes were in reality of excellent quality and very cheap ; so that as soon as the widow had left the station for good, Mrs. Cox forgave her handsomely, and used for ever afterwards to speak patronisingly of having contributed liberally towards restoring the broken fortunes of " poor Mrs. Broderick, when she lost her husband and came down in the world."

And so ended the feud started by the *Khalîfa* !

“QUANTUM MUTATUS AB ILLO HECTORE !”

Scarcely troubling to conceal his yawns, Lord Hector finally focused his camera on to a group of children and old women, and snapped the shutter with an air of disappointment. “I don’t see many emaciated people here,” he said rather gloomily.

“No ; and you won’t either on any of *my* works,” replied Austin the Collector. “There are two things we don’t allow in famine ; one is wandering, and the other is emaciation. The one leads to the other ; and then you get starvation and crime, and your district gets out of hand. So we put heart and hope into the able-bodied by making timely agricultural advances to those who have land, and by opening big and small works near their homes for the others. As for the aged, cripples and invalids, we keep them alive with gratuitous doles in their own villages, and if you come with me to inspect *them*, you will see plenty of horrors and deformities in the guise of humanity. The rains fail so often here that we have learnt to meet distress in time, and so prevent despair and disorder. I have known many riots in my time, but never one due to starvation ; though of course in towns there are occasional outbreaks when profiteering grain-dealers hold up prices beyond endurance. But we don’t pamper or fatten the people, I can tell you. Those working women carrying earth get only about two pence a day, and the kids you have just photographed, who are playing at clod-breaking

on the embankment, get only half as much. Let's go and watch the supervisors measuring up the work. I want also to see whether the task is suitable. If the soil is very stiff, I have to reduce it ; otherwise the fines for short work are excessive, and the people don't get enough to eat : but if they come to a soft patch of earth, I raise the task for the diggers."

The two men were standing on the top of the huge earthen embankment, which was being constructed by famine labour to dam up the steepest of the ravines lying between the cultivated uplands and the river. A forbidding network of such ravines, arid, hard and barren, stretched before them as far as the eye could see, and beyond them all the sun was sinking behind the distant river, a sullen ball of crimson which flooded the monotonous gravel gorges and brightened the scanty garments of the children tapping the earth on the embankment. A stream of women and boys, carrying baskets on their heads, was still plodding up and down the narrow path, which wound down to the borrow-pits below ; but work was almost over for the day, so Austin led Lord Hector cautiously down to see the measuring. A shabby Eurasian with drug-sodden eyes welcomed the Collector. " Good-evening, Mr. Leo," said the latter, " how is the work getting on ? "

" Many newcomers this morning, Sahib," replied the supervisor ; and total population on work now exceeds three thousand, including ladies and children. Also two babies born in camp this week, and maternity allowance of Rupee one only given to each mother and

duly acknowledged in accounts. But in spite of great congestion, no cholera or other noxious disease, by your favour."

"Good," said Austin briefly; "What's your task now?"

"Ninety cubic feet," was the reply; "unchanged since your honour raised it from eighty last month."

"Humph," reflected Austin half aloud; "I think I shall have to raise it again except for the newcomers: I noticed that several of the old hands finished their ninety long before sunset: we mustn't make the conditions too attractive, or we shall get all the scallywags from native states here. Let's have a look at the task."

He took a spade from one of the diggers, and hacked at the soil himself in half a dozen pits in different parts of the work, while Lord Hector looked on with an expression of supercilious boredom.

When Austin had finished his enquiries, visited the workers' camp and dispensary, made his notes, and ordered the inspection-book to be sent to his own camp to be written up at night, the two men started homewards, walking by the side of the long spur which led from the main embankment to the cultivated fields. The entire work was designed, on the Italian model, to impound all the rain-water in the catchment area, to prevent further erosion by tropical torrents, and to reclaim area already lost by causing deposits of silt in the ravine heads; and the side spur, half a mile long, had been constructed so as to train the monsoon floods against the main dam, and protect its flanks against undercutting and lateral scouring. It was now getting dark; but there was still light enough to see

a large herd of antelope some way off on the other side of this spur.

"There's your chance, Hector," exclaimed Austin; "I can see two or three fine heads in that herd. If you creep up behind this bank, you'll get an easy shot. And we want some meat, as the mutton arrived bad this morning."

Hector exchanged his camera for his Mauser, and hurried towards the antelope, stooping low beneath the shelter of the spur. Presently he stopped and took aim, supporting his rifle on the bank. A shot rang out, and Austin could see him scrambling over the bank and running towards something. Hastening along the spur to join in the chase, Austin saw the herd scurrying away into the distance; the graceful glossy black buck with corkscrew horns, were bounding high into the air off all four feet together, a beautiful sight in the evening glow. Behind the main herd were a few startled stragglers, and last of all was one brown, hornless creature dragging a broken, bleeding hind leg. Lord Hector had shot a doe! But there was no time to discuss whether this had been done accidentally through bad shooting, or deliberately through bad sportmanship. They must hurry after the wounded animal and despatch it if possible. But though the poor doe could not live a couple of hours, she could run—and run surprisingly fast—on three legs, and it was unsafe in this light to take long shots with a high-velocity rifle. Soon they had to give up the chase; and disgusted as he was with the whole affair, Austin was perhaps secretly relieved at not having to return to camp with a doe. At any rate all he could bring himself to say, as he unloaded

his rifle, was—“ I am afraid the jackals will get our dinner ! ” But next morning he had another twinge of shame : for as he was inspecting the local police station, and with some satisfaction pointing out to Lord Hector the low incidence of recorded crime, a village menial, willing to earn a Rupee and ignorantly supposing that the Sahibs would be pleased to receive the trophy of their *shikâr*, crept up and humbly presented a little brown doe-skin. The villager got his Rupee, but it was humiliation rather than gratitude that the Sahibs felt.

Lord Hector was the fourth baron, and his father had succeeded to the title in peculiar, not to say mysterious, circumstances. The first peer was Leopold Alfred Hector, who had been a soldier of fortune in India at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Originally in the British Army, he quitted it on getting his company for the superior attractions of employment in native states. He raised and commanded a brigade of infantry for Holkar of Indore, and often served on political missions both for that prince and for the East India Company. His prowess both military and diplomatic was remarkable, while his feats of personal bravery made him the idol of all his followers, as well as involving him in adventures of the most sensational kind. He rose to great wealth and position, and was received at native courts with much dignity, ceremony and advantage to himself. On one occasion he was acting as British envoy to the Emperor at Delhi, and while the *pour parlers* were proceeding, he perceived a pair of bright eyes watching him from behind the women's *parda* which adjoined the hall of audience. They

belonged to one of the Imperial princesses, and the attraction was apparently as mutual as it was sudden. At any rate Major Hector (as he then was) managed to secure an interview with the girl, and his importance as British representative so powerfully overcame all the objections of religion and scruples of custom, that the Emperor finally gave his sanction to their marriage. The wedding was celebrated with imperial pomp, and the union lasted till the lady's death fifteen years later. The extent of their family was uncertain, but at any rate one son was born, who was given an Indian name, as well as being called Leopold, or Leo, after his father. The boy was brought up as a Muhammadan by his mother, and after her death by her relatives. He inherited great estates from both parents, but these were rapidly dissipated by extravagance. His birth and name enabled him too to marry into a royal house, but habits of luxury and sensuality were continued by his family and subsequent generations, so that before long a splendid property had passed to money-lenders, while its proper owners were sunk in slothful penury. Meantime Major Hector was serving Holkar, until that prince made an alliance with Scindia and the Raja of Berar, and then proceeded to behead all Englishmen who refused to fight against their own countrymen. Hector had great difficulty in escaping this fate by jumping down a precipice into a river, and swimming, running and hiding for his life till he came to British territory. Arrived there he rejoined the Company's service, raised a well-known regiment of cavalry, and rose to great distinction, receiving the title of K.C.B. His wife was now dead and he had lost touch with his family, on whom,

however, he had already settled one princely fortune. When his time came to retire, Hector, now a Colonel, took his second fortune to England, bought an estate, married again and settled down. For his distinguished services, both military and political, he received a peerage, and the arms of the new barony became a lion rampant, with the significant motto “ Desit ne praeda leoni ! ”

The first Lord Hector had three sons by his English wife, and when he died after twelve years of retirement, the eldest succeeded without question to the title and estate, as well as to the family name Leopold. Why the Indian family put in no claim at this point is uncertain ; perhaps they did not know of Lord Hector's death or even of his peerage ; perhaps they did not care. But when the second baron died twenty years later, a claimant suddenly appeared from India to contest the title. He was undoubtedly the first baron's grandson, and it was understood that the English family resisted the claim on the ground that the Delhi marriage was invalid in English law. The suit threatened to become notorious, when it was somewhat mysteriously withdrawn. It seems probable that the claimant, who was ill-provided with funds and found life in England much more expensive than he had expected, was starved into surrender by constant postponements of the case engineered by the opposite party ; and was ultimately bought off by cash down sufficient to appeal to his spendthrift nature. At any rate he disappeared as suddenly and unaccountably as he had arrived, and thereafter the English family continued in possession undisturbed by their Eurasian cousins.

The third Lord Hector lived a life of loose pleasure, and married beneath him. In his lazy way he was an artist and a vagabond, and his end came in a public house, after he had spent a fortnight on the road in a state of semi-intoxication. His son devoted himself to restoring the estate, broken by two generations of extravagance. He sold land to pay off mortgages, let the great house, speculated shrewdly, took his seat in the House of Lords, and simulated great interest in Indian affairs with a view to securing a post under Government. He had read up his great-grandfather's career, and did not see why he should not be able to lay hands on part at least of the first fortune which his distinguished ancestor had left in the hands of his Indian family. If the Delhi marriage was invalid for the purpose of the English title, it might also be found invalid for the purpose of the property in India. Hence his visit to that country. His battery of weapons was only a blind; for he was no sportsman, though he talked much about big game in Africa. His researches into Indian economic conditions were only a blind; for he was no statesman or scholar, and the true objects of his tour were, firstly to establish a reputation with the India Office, and secondly to pick holes in the title deeds of his Eurasian kinsmen.

.

Now much of the first Lord Hector's property together with its headquarters, lay in Austin's district, and it was for this reason that the fourth baron had secured an introduction to its Collector. A day or two later he broached the subject to his host, and delicately suggested a visit to the once-famous estate. Austin arranged to

go on the following Sunday, and then added :—“ Do you remember the supervisor I spoke to on the famine work ? He is always called “ Mr. Leo,” but his real name is Leopold Hector, and he lives on the estate with his younger brother Alfred, or “ Mr. Alf.” They pretend to be Christians, but have all the Muhammadan vices, without any of their virtues or observances ; and I don’t think they really believe in any religion whatever. They have very little education, and it was rather a job when I made Mr. Leo a supervisor on this temporary famine work on Rs 50 a month (about £40 a year). They are direct descendants of the first Lord Hector, and they will perhaps be able to show us round I will give Mr. Leo the Sunday off to go to his home.”

So next Sunday morning they were met on the borders of Hectorpur by Mr. Leo, who looked unnaturally bright about the eyes, and was dressed in white ducks, canvas shoes, and an old frock-coat, now almost bottle-green with age, which had been surreptitiously presented to the disreputable wearer by Austin himself. The village and its neighbours were prosperous and fertile (in normal seasons), but not a rood now belonged to the Hector family. The visitors passed along a curious avenue of stumps, where a century before Lord Hector had planted 100,000 forest trees in one straight line a mile long ; suspecting the extravagance of his heirs, he had deliberately tied up some of his money in this way, saying to himself that if these trees grew to be worth only two Rupees apiece, there would be two lakhs of money (£13,333) ready for an emergency. But before two generations had passed every tree had been cut down, and sold for a few annas apiece to pay for feasts,

dancing girls, and drinking. Half-way along the avenue was the family grave-yard, where lay Hectors, princesses and *begums*, buried beneath stately monuments of marble: but all the inlaid precious stones had been picked out, and the very lead within the inscriptions had been extracted and melted down, leaving the lettering almost undecipherable. Summer-houses, terraces and balustrades of marble had been treated in the same iconoclastic fashion, everything of ornament or value having been removed and sold. The great military fort in the centre of the village looked imposing from a distance, but a nearer scrutiny showed nothing but dilapidation, vandalism, and desecration. Weeds reigned in the stables, bats in the gateways, and dirt in the racking vacancies of the halls of state. An enormous bell brought by the first Lord Hector from a campaign in Burma, and some rusty old cannon from the fortresses of Central India, were the sole relics of pristine splendour, and these remained only because they were too heavy to be worth removing. In one corner of the slimy courtyard one or two nondescript females could be seen carrying earthen vessels between the decaying old well and a line of outhouses which seemed to be occupied. Hither Lord Hector and Austin were conducted by Mr. Leo, who with a flourish which was half subservience and half self-assertion, invited them to be seated. They complied, but with considerable diffidence; for the only possible seats were a bamboo chair without a back and a rope-woven cot which sagged woefully in the middle, and which with its untidy sheet and soiled pillows, had the appearance of very recent occupation. The room reeked with the fumes of opium, and the

rancid smell of garlic and fried grease came from an adjoining kitchen. Presently in tottered Mr. Alf, a vestige of humanity so woe-begone and sottish, that Mr. Leo, disreputable as he was, looked positively heroic beside him. Both brothers began eagerly talking, using a sort of spluttering Eurasian English, eked out with vernacular terms. Lord Hector scarcely attempted to listen or to conceal his disgust ; but with the Collector they pleaded, feverishly producing certificates and other papers. “ We have many *sanads*, Sahib,” they stammered ; “ please see. Searching enquiree will prove *pakka* rights of English lordship. We both being in direct line of Lord Hector and daughter of Emperor ; and Mr. Leo, he being eldest son of eldest son of direct lordship.”

“ But what will be the good if you *do* prove all this ? ” asked Austin.

“ Sahib make good report to Government of India, who give poleetical pinshin (pension) to English lord. Besides, it is understood that there is much propertee in Wilâyat (England), which must go to English lordship when proved to satisfaction of proper court. Those *haramzâda vakîls* in Wilâyat (misbegotten lawyers in England) falsely saying princess’s marriage *nâjâiz* (invalid); we proving marriage quite all serene by this sarteeficate of *pakka* English church. *Vakîls* in *Wilâyat* getting old decree by *sâzish* (collusion) : we now reviving case in proper court.”

And they thrust some papers and photographs on to the unwilling Austin, who shortly afterwards made his departure with Lord Hector.

That evening after his work Austin brought some

papers into the room where Lord Hector sat, biting his nails and sipping his second sherry-and-bitters. "Did you follow what those poor wretches were saying this morning," asked Austin.

"Oh! more or less. But if they have anything to prove, they should have done it years ago, when my father succeeded to the title. Personally I don't believe a word of that so-called princess creature being a lawful wife. I don't suppose she was any more moral than the rest of these damned niggers."

"I don't know what happened about that case," replied Austin; "but ever since that time the family have not had a penny or an acre to bless themselves with—leave alone bringing cases in court. You can see for yourself how miserably poor and helpless they are; and nobody is likely to finance a case like this. However, there is no doubt of their direct descent in the male line from Lord Hector and the Emperor's daughter, and it may interest you to look at this paper." And he handed him a long parchment. It was the marriage-certificate, signed by an Archdeacon and dated 18th May 1809 at Delhi, of Leopold Alfred Hector (Major) to Hazrat-un-nissa Begum, daughter of Shahan-Shah Bahadur, Emperor of Delhi.

Lord Hector looked at the certificate for two or three minutes frowning; then he went to the writing table, and took out his fountain-pen, leaving the paper on the floor.

"Are you busy, or shall I call for dinner?" presently suggested Austin.

"I am just writing to the P. and O. in Bombay for a passage by the next mail steamer," was the reply.

THE TRIDENT

The European settlement of Mallakhet, half cantonment, half sanatorium, lay along a level plateau facing the mighty snow barrier of Himalaya, and on a secluded seat fronting northwards at the end of the ridge sat a man and a woman. Behind and half round them towered the fragrant silences of a deodar forest ; while from the lower slopes beneath their feet came the sweet mysterious whisperings of long-needed pines rustling in the dying wind. Poised in the valley a thousand feet below hung heavy masses of fleecy cloud, looking like gigantic heaps of cotton-wool suspended in mid-air ; and still further down nestled a stone-built native village, from which cultivated terraces climbed up the hill-sides in a chequered pattern of green and brown. Down a hundred ravines mountain torrents tore and scoured their tumultuous way, echoing remotely over the silent vastness of the valley ; while above and beyond all, right across the northern horizon from west to east, stretched the most sublime prospect in nature—that wall of eternal snow, which thrusts its myriad peaks, from eighteen to twenty-five thousand feet above sea-level, into the vault of heaven, shapes which inspire and yet baffle the imagination of man, glaciers which dazzle his vision, heights which for ever defy the violation of his foot. Far away to the north-west the sun was sinking behind the snow-capped shrines of Badrinath and Kedarnath ; and with the withdrawal of

his tropical rays the light clouds, which had hung all day about the summits of the range, began to disperse, some sinking to lower levels, others precipitating as snow on to the peaks. The celestial giants now gleamed continuous and serene, seeming like one unbroken fortress of lustrous majesty,—the huge untrodden back of Nanda Devi, the massive battlements of Nanda Kòt, the five hollow curves of Panch Chula—awful cooking places of the gods, and, dominating them all like a triple bastion, the three-pronged Trisul, symbolical trident of Mahadeo, the great god of power, the destroyer and avenger. It was as if Omnipotence smiled upon nature, smiled upon humanity !

But the couple on the bench, the man and the other man's wife, were not looking at the snows : they were looking into each other's eyes : for incipient mundane passion had blinded their souls to the heavenly vision. " The golden moments in the stream of life rush past us," wrote George Eliot, " and we see nothing but sand ; the angels come to visit us, and we only know them when they are gone."

" Won't you listen to me, Peggy darling ? " he whispered, with a squeeze of her hand.

" How can I, Paddy dear ? I belong to Jim."

" Jim ? " contemptuously ; " and what can Jim give you, that I cannot give much better ? Can he box and swim and shoot like me ? Can he make you as happy as I could ? "

" He has been a faithful, good husband to me, Paddy, though he hasn't the way with him that you have. How can I leave him to himself ? "

" A man who can't keep his own wife's love don't

deserve no pity," urged Paddy with the cruel logic of the strong male ; " if it wasn't for Jim, would you come to me, darling ? "

" Mebbe," she faltered ; and she clung to his embrace, as he took her in his arms. But as they kissed, the sunset flush which lightened the triple face of Trisul was suddenly blotted out by a cloud, and the smile on the emblem of Mahadeo changed into a frown. The cloud vanished as quickly as it had come, but by now the rosy smile had gone, and all that remained was the dead white serenity of indifference, darkening, ever darkening.

Then the tempter departed—for a time, and the two separated ; for night was at hand, and they would be missed. Peggy returned alone to her quarters, where she found her husband already lighting the lamps. " Have you been out again with Paddy ? " he asked a little curtly. " Yes Jim," she admitted. " Do you think it right to me to go about with him so much ? " was the next question. " That's my business," she retorted.

Jim Stokes was an affectionate husband and a conscientious soldier, but troubled of late with a growing jealousy. He knew something of Paddy Murphy's attentions to his wife, guessed more, and suspected more still. They had not been married long, and had been happy enough together until Murphy joined the regiment ; but now he felt himself at a disadvantage in comparison with this rollicking, debonair Irishman. By steady attention to duty and discipline he himself hoped soon to get his stripe, and modest though he was, he did not fear to be supplanted in point of official

promotion. But Murphy, an ex-sailor with his jolly laugh and voice, an ex-traveller with his racy fund of stories, an athlete and marksman who had won the regimental prizes for swimming, boxing and shooting, —this splendid Irish giant had captivated the hearts of all the women and half the men in a short space of time. But his popularity was not equalled either by his moral or his soldierly qualities. As to the former, Stokes knew more of the newcomer's careless devilry than it was possible to mention to a woman ; and as to the latter, Murphy had actually been tried as a corporal, but had been found wanting, and had been reduced to the ranks. Before the regiment came to the Hills, he had several times been punished with confinement to barracks for thrashing punkah-coolies, for quarrelling with native villagers, and for shooting sacred pea-fowl near temples in defiance of regulations. But these delinquencies, together with a taste for liquor, though they had led to trouble with the officers, had not diminished his popularity with the men : for though temperate behaviour and consideration for Indian susceptibilities are conscientiously taught by means of simple rules printed and circulated in regiments, it is to be feared that British soldiers do not readily absorb the doctrine of colour-equality. Still less were the affections of the ladies alienated by official censure or even punishment ; so that Stokes, knowing Murphy's real character (including his standard in regard to women) better than his wife could, watched their intimacy with ever-growing uneasiness. He wished the man no harm, and he was too honourable to tell tales ; but he longed with all his heart that something might

happen to remove the fascinating Irishman from the regiment and therefore from his wife's society.

It was therefore with secret feelings of relief that Jim Stokes heard the order that the regiment was immediately to leave the pleasant and invigorating leisure of Mallakhet, and go into camp at Kâli Tâl, a lake on a lower level but still in the heart of the Hills. The women were to be left behind in their quarters on the ridge ; and Jim's real sorrow at leaving his wife was tempered by joy that she would now be saved—at any rate for a time—from temptation and perhaps worse !

The duty to which the regiment was going was to act as guard to a thousand or so of prisoners taken by the British in a war not yet concluded. These captives, not being orientals, were to be interned in the cool of the Hills instead of the heat of the plains, and the old abandoned cantonment, which lay on the terraces and gentle wooded slopes of the Kâli Tâl valley, was already being re-constructed for their temporary accommodation. This was a three days march from Mallakhet, and Jim rather enjoyed the movement and change of scenery. The first stage led them steeply down the slope to cross the upper reaches of the Tarju, a tempestuous hill-torrent which, rising in the great snows above, dashed its foaming grey waters past huge boulders and through eddying pools full of *mahseer*, soon to burst into the plains below and feed the head works of one of the mighty canal systems of northern India. As the regiment toiled up the slopes beyond, Jim, delightedly recognising many an English tree or shrub, was often reminded by the mistletoe on the medlar

of Christmas and orchards at Home, while Paddy Murphy was cracking dubious jokes at the expense of the comely Hill-women, who from time to time turned unveiled heads to look at the unfamiliar British soldiers.

A thousand feet above their first encamping-ground towered the precipitous crag of Muktipata, the peak of salvation ; and a few enthusiasts obtained leave to explore this mountain in the evening. Among them were Jim Stokes and Paddy Murphy, the former from his love of natural beauty, the latter from his irrepressible longing for a " lark." As they wound their way up the hill-side, the dim rustling of resinous pines gradually gave way to the solemn ruggedness of gnarled oaks and rhododendrons ; and higher still the ground became bare, with a hundred feet of sheer rock at the summit. Here, eight thousand feet above the sea, a tiny temple was perched, guarded by an old priest with matted hair and ochre-coloured robe, who squatted for ever on the ledge before the shrine, swaying his body, mumbling his *mantras* (spells or verses in Sanskrit), and gazing at Trisul. Over the doorway was a trident, and within was the image of Shiva or Mahadeo, faced eternally by a marble cow, the animal sacred to that divinity. Below the temple a huge boulder jutted out, as though suspended in mid air, above a sheer fall of two hundred feet, and this was the rock of *Mukti* or salvation ; for every pious Hindu who climbed round the underside of this rock was assured of eternal life.

Arrived at the summit Jim, mindful of regulations, avoided these holy places, and stood apart, gazing at the stupendous view of the snows, and sometimes looking down at Mallakhet and fancying he could pick out

—there on the ledge of the long plateau—the quarters where he had left his little wife. But Paddy had no such sentimental reflections : with characteristic boisterousness he strode into the shrine, laid a sacrilegious hand upon the round smooth stone which embodied the great god, and laughed carelessly at the old priest's protests. When he saw the overhanging boulder and heard that devout pilgrims obtained salvation by climbing round beneath it, he at once declared that a sailor could do what a “ b——y nigger ” could do, and that he would have a good try for salvation himself. Quickly he lowered himself below the crag, and, before swinging clear to the other side, he deliberately hung at half way by one hand and one naked foot, took out a blue pencil, and scrawled his initials on the sacred red smear on the under side of the fearsome ledge. Having safely accomplished this really remarkable gymnastic feat, he threw a few pice contemptuously at the priest, and prepared to depart. But the holy man, outraged at the sacrilege, spat on the coins, seized Murphy by the wrist, and with three skinny fingers made the mark of the trident upon the intruder's brow. He then held up the three fingers, as if in invocation, and called down upon the Irishman the most frightful curses of Shiva, the god of power, the destroyer, the avenger. But these execrations were couched in Sanskrit and Hindi, and Murphy, understanding none of them, only snapped his fingers light-heartedly, and waved an airy farewell to the old priest, as he started at the head of his companions down the steep hill-side to the encampment below.

.

The next day's march was uneventful and easy, being

mostly downhill ; but on the third morning the regiment had a long steady climb, and early in the afternoon they reached the pass leading into the Kâli Tâl basin, and halted to look down at the beautiful dark lake. Like jade it gleamed, green deepening into grey, there at the bottom of the valley ; and as the path zigzagged through thickets of oak and cypress down to the old cantonment, the soldiers caught ever-changing glimpses of the placid mysterious depths of the water below. Curved like a half-moon, three-quarters of a mile long, half a mile broad, and unknown hundreds of feet deep, the lake of Kâli —Kâli the dark goddess of human sacrifice, Kâli the female counterpart of Shiva the avenger—nestled in the bosom of a thousand hills. On three sides thickly-wooded slopes rose steeply to the heights of from one to two thousand feet, while on the fourth side the valley opened out into gently-rising glades and terraces, whereon were situated the old barracks now allotted to the foreign prisoners and the rows of E.P. tents in which their guard were to live. Behind and above the settlement towered a grey rocky mountain, the highest in the neighbourhood. This, like the others, had once been green with oak and rhododendron, but a quarter of a century earlier, after a rainfall of forty inches in three days, half the hill-side had swept into the lake in a liquid avalanche of shale, destroying the few houses then standing, raising a monstrous bore in the lake, and precipitating men and beasts into eternity. But since then drains had been built, cypresses planted on the broken steep, and serious land-slides were rare, and indeed possible only in the monsoon, which was now over. The regiment

sent on guard duty settled down with soldierly adaptability into the monotony of their task. Their prisoners, though stout, powerful men, were easy to handle not to say sulky : a few wandered peacefully about the forests, cutting walking sticks or carving toys out of oak ; but the majority seemed to prefer to lounge in bed with curtains drawn, and there were no attempts to escape or to harass the villagers. Their British guards were more energetic, and fishing and rowing on the lake were common. One day Murphy organised a boating party of five and Stokes was included. The latter, who had not an ounce of malice or resentment in his composition, accepted the invitation, though he was doubtful about the motive which prompted it. He was a poor oarsman and could not swim a stroke, and he rather expected that the Irishman, who was a first-rate waterman and swimmer, besides being up to every kind of prank and " lark," meant to put some practical joke upon him or subject him to some sneering humiliation : for he knew that Paddy despised him, and the memory of Peggy always stood between them, silent but insistent. However, he did not like to refuse, so the five men started cheerfully enough for the lake. But it was soon evident that Paddy the irrepressible was indeed " out for a lark." On one side of the water stood a hotel, kept by a Parsee whose licence prohibited the selling of alcohol to British soldiers. Here Paddy led his party, and boisterously ordered an abundance of stimulating refreshment. The timid Parsee, partly from cowardice, partly from avarice, supplied the liquor, after a few half-hearted protests, at double the usual prices ; and though the rest of the party took

little and the law-abiding Stokes contented himself with ginger-ale, Murphy was soon bubbling over with excitement and ready for anything. Besides beer, he had consumed three-quarters of a bottle of whisky with little help from the others, and he insisted on taking away an unopened bottle under his arm. Close to the boat-house was the temple of Kâli, Kâli the goddess of sacrifice, Kâli the dark genius of the lake who claimed for its waters at least one human victim every year. Recklessly Murphy strode into the temple with his boots on, profanely saluted a black image with a mock salaam, sacrilegiously poured a libation of whisky over the flowers, rice and other pious offerings at the foot of the goddess. Infuriated by this outrage, the yellow-robed priest shrieked in dismay, and seizing from the altar a three-pointed trident of iron, he made with it on the intruder's breast the triple mark, the emblem of Mahadeo and of Kâli his dreadful mate. Holy curses too he rained upon the Irishman, muttering that Kâli had not yet this year claimed her sacrifice, her annual propitiation of blood ; but now the time was ripe !

Murphy, though too drunk to attend to these vapourings, considered the sunlight more healthy than that dark ominous shrine, and hurried out to join his companions. They were soon in the boat, where Murphy being in command promptly took the rudder-strings, and made the others row while he kept time with flourishes of the whisky bottle. He jeered at the unfortunate oarsmen, and especially at Stokes, who began to catch crabs through sheer nervousness ; and presently when they were half-way across to the island in the middle of the lake, he stood up in the stern, and

began to rock the boat from side to side to emphasise his jests and his orders. "Make her travel, you blighters," he shouted; "why I can make her move more with my two feet than the lot of you with your arms and legs. As for Jim, he's such a poor miserable critter that—." The rest was swallowed up in a tremendous lurch; and all poor Jim could do was to blurt out "For Heaven's sake sit down, Paddy." "Sit down, is it?" retorted Paddy; "that's all *you're* fit for: it's nothing but a coward *you* are! and you a married man!" And he ended with a coarse laugh and an unrepeatable taunt about Peggy. Jim with difficulty kept his temper; indeed the only possible thing to do was to sit still. But on Paddy the mention of Peggy had an exciting effect, and an evil thought came into his drink-sodden mind. He thought of her fair face, of her yielding figure in his arms as it had been that evening on the ridge of Mallakhet. And what was the answer she had given to his question? "If it wasn't for Jim," he had asked, "would you come to me?"; and she had coyly whispered "Mebbe." Suppose now an accident were to happen to this boat! Suppose he rocked it a bit too far over with his feet! What would be the harm? He himself would be all right; an old sailor could look after himself in the water, and the island was not far away. As for the contemptible Jim, if he couldn't swim, that was his own look-out, and in any case he would be no loss to anyone—least of all to Peggy, who would soon find a more deserving husband. But he must nerve himself with a little more liquor before he played any further tricks; so, with a lurch which nearly swamped the boat, he stooped and broke

off the neck of the bottle against his boot, and, bracing his two feet unsteadily on top of the gunwales, poured the raw whisky down his throat. They were now swaying about most dangerously, and presently a little ripple passed down the lake. Whether this upset Murphy's balance, or whether he purposely increased the rocking of his body, will never be known ; but suddenly his foot seemed to slip, the whole of his great weight came down on one side, and the boat capsized. In a moment the whole party was floundering in the water ; but there were men on the island and help was at hand. In two or three minutes four dripping figures were hauled ashore ; but where was the fifth ? Where was Paddy Murphy ? With a wild glance round, and animated by he knew not what impulse, Jim Stokes plunged back into the water in the direction where he thought he saw bubbles rising. But it was useless. A boat was soon afloat and searching everywhere, and Jim, now in an exhausted condition, was rescued a second time. But there was no sign of Murphy. Of the five men, four, who could not swim a stroke, were saved ; and the only one who was drowned was the only one who could swim—and he a sailor ! His heart, labouring furiously under the stimulation of alcohol, had been unable to stand the shock of the icy water ; and he had sunk like a stone. Four days later when his body rose from the depths of the lake, his features were discoloured and distorted beyond recognition. The man who had thrice flouted the power of the trident, the man who for his sacrilege had been frowned at by Mahadeo of Himalaya, banned from salvation by Shiva of Muktipata, and doomed by Kâli of the black lake, had

paid the penalty. Sin must be propitiated, and Kâli had claimed her victim.

.

For some time Jim Stokes lay dangerously ill in hospital, and his wife was sent for. As he recovered, he was cheered by the sense of duty done, but rather surprised when others called it heroism. Removed from the spell of Paddy's presence, Peggy had time to reflect upon the true qualities of the two men—the man from whose dangerous fascination she had escaped, and the man to whom she now clung with more than her old love and admiration.

“Do you love me now, darling, more than any of the others?” asked Jim softly.

“Mebbe,” was the gentle reply; but her kisses told him more than her words.

A NEW ABRAHAM

It is a commonplace that all the good things of this life turn to evil if enjoyed in excess. The too ardent quest of wealth results in worry, of sensual pleasure in satiety, of sport in staleness, of ambition in boredom, of fashion in ennui, of learning in unpractical and even supercilious habits. In the mind of Ibrahîm, who was something of a philosopher as well as a successful lawyer, these rather sombre considerations derived point and poignancy from his own domestic trials. The possession of *one* wife and family, he felt, might be a comfort and a happiness ; but the possession of *two* meant nothing but perpetual discord and vexation. He had long wondered why the Prophet had permitted polygamy, and the irony of the permission seemed all the more piquant when it masqueraded as a privilege. True enough, few Muhammadans availed themselves of this equivocal concession ; but that was for reasons of economy ; and rich men who could afford to keep two or more wives were often envied by their poorer brethren. Even Ibrahîm's august namesake, Abraham, had not exactly made a success of the experiment ; but that example had never yet deterred anyone who wanted to marry a second wife, any more than it had deterred Ibrahîm himself in his younger days. For he had married twice, and both *begums* were still living : his first wife had been chosen by his family for her birth and suitability, his second by himself for her personal fascina-

tions ; so that it is hardly necessary to record that the latter was his favourite. The fact is that the senior *begum*, though she had borne a son, Ishâk, had always been rather old for her husband and was now ageing rapidly : moreover her shrewish disposition and shrill tongue had alienated him from the first ; and when he began to seek distraction elsewhere, her openly expressed jealousy, which was intelligible to everybody except Ibrahîm himself, had an effect precisely opposite to what she intended — that is, it drove him into the arms of another woman. So he had taken a second wife, who strove to keep his affections by her charm instead of her dignity, by cajoling instead of nagging. Her efforts were successful, and were strongly reinforced when she gave birth to a son, Ismaîl, of whom his father grew to be very fond. The two families lived in separate quarters of the same large house, and the backbiting and intrigue which went on between them were a constant source of irritation and misery to Ibrahîm. In the battles of mutual jealousy and malice which grew more bitter as time went on, her husband, though he often tried to make peace, almost invariably took the part of the younger *begum*, who could still wheedle him into almost anything on behalf of herself or her son. This was unfortunate and unfair to Ishâk, who was in fact Ismaîl's superior in almost every quality of mind and body. Both youths were educated sufficiently to pass the matriculation standard, beyond which, as so often happens in India, their father declined to pay for their further instruction. The result was that both were somewhat vaguely candidates for Government service, and this rivalry still further exacerbated the ill-feelings

between the two families. In this competition for a career Ishâk ought to have won easily ; for in body he was healthy and athletic, in intelligence bright and adaptable, and in character clean and tolerably disciplined ; whereas Ismaïl was weedy, cunning and dissipated, having been brought up to sloth and self-indulgence by an ill-bred though seductive mother. But when an appointment actually offered itself, it was the younger, not the older lad who received it. For this jobbery Ibrahîm himself, under his junior wife's cajoleries, was responsible. He was vice-chairman of the municipal board, and when the post of octroi-superintendent fell vacant, the city fathers were ready enough to accept any nominee of Ibrahîm's. It was true that there were at least fifty competent outsiders who applied ; but they had no backing except from a small clique of Hindus who disliked the vice-chairman for personal or racial reasons. In Europe nepotism, when practised, is usually apologised for ; in Indian society it is the normal principle in the exercise of patronage, and apology would be due for its neglect rather than for its observance. What was the use of being in official power, if one could not give a vacant position to one's own son ? So the whole city was ready to welcome either Ishâk or Ismaïl as its new octroi-superintendent, and it was of course their father's prerogative to choose between their respective merits and abilities.

So Ibrahîm had secured the appointment of Ismaïl, to the jubilation of the junior *begum*, the mortification of the senior lady, and the disappointment of Ishâk, who, having learnt some of the principles of fair play by taking part in British games, had bitterly, though

respectfully, reproached his father with the injustice done to his own superior qualifications. The old man in fact was even now returning dejectedly from one of his rare evening visits to the elder wife, during which Ishâk, after vigorous protests, had left his parents in some anger. After his departure Ibrahîm had endured another hour of taunts and revilings from the embittered mother, and then, to cool his aching head, he took a stroll along a short unfrequented path which lay between his house and the city. As he walked, he was making the philosophical reflections recorded at the beginning of this story, and wondering (as many others have) whether the pleasure of bestowing patronage was worth the anxiety and trouble it involved. After a few minutes he was about to turn home again to bed, since it was nearly midnight, when his foot stumbled against a soft heavy object which lay half in the ditch half in the path. He stooped and felt it in the darkness ; it was a human body. He struck a match and looked : it was his son Ismaîl, unconscious but still living. Hastily summoning servants, he brought the lad tenderly home, and sent for the assistant surgeon. Ismaîl had been stunned by the blow of a heavy *lathi* (bludgeon) across the head ; but there was also something else, and something very peculiar, the matter with him. That odour in the breath, that glassy deadness in the eyes, said the doctor, could mean only one thing—opium, and not opium-eating, but opium-smoking, which is far worse. The wound on the head was dressed, and the young man lay torpid till daylight, when the police came to investigate, and the magistrate to record his dying deposition. This was given disjointedly and

heavily, but one thing was clear : Ismaïl named as his assailant Ishâk, his brother. Asked for details and about the opium, he relapsed into real or pretended stupor, and about noon he died. At the inquest the cause of death was medically certified to be cerebral concussion supervening upon excessive indulgence in opium-smoking ; but there was no doubt that a predisposing cause was a constitution enfeebled by a long course of pernicious habits, including drugs. Ismaïl's movements for the few hours before he was found in the ditch were a profound mystery. Apparently the last time he had been seen in health was at an octroi barrier not half a mile from Ibrahîm's house ; this he inspected officially at about 6 p.m., and Narain Das the clerk in charge of that post said he had observed his new chief with some care, and had noticed nothing special except that he was dressed rather smartly, wearing in particular a new shirt ; this was conspicuous because, after the fashion of Indian dandies, the tails were flying loose outside the *pyjamas*, and one of these tails had printed on it an ornate trade-mark, a sort of coat of arms representing the Manchester firm which had manufactured the material. Such trade-marks are very popular in Indian society, and the end portion of a roll of cotton fetches a higher price in the bazar than the rest, because it is fashionable to flaunt the trade-mark in a conspicuous place such as the outside of an umbrella or the flap of a shirt or loin-cloth. Now Ismaïl's parents both remembered this particular shirt of his ; he had treated himself to it only a few days before on the strength of getting his new appointment, and had been particularly proud of the flamboyant pattern on

the tail : and the remarkable point was that when he was found in the ditch, he was not wearing it, though the rest of his costume was complete. There was no trace of it in his room, and no one had the slightest idea when or where or why he had taken it off. The shirt had simply disappeared.

For Ismaïl's murder his half-brother Ishâk was promptly arrested, and his rooms were searched. The evidence against him was Ismaïl's dying accusation, together with the well-known jealousy between the two brothers—jealousy which had but now been fanned into active loathing by the younger lad's appointment to the coveted post of octroi-superintendent. This last the poor father himself had to corroborate, admitting that Ishâk had used bitter and even reckless language against his brother that very evening. To most people it seemed pretty certain, and even natural, that the elder brother, descended as he was from pugnacious ancestors, burning long since with family hatred, and now stung with humiliation and envy, had committed the murder. The only doubt sprang from the question of opium drugging ; for though Ismaïl was known to have been addicted to this, no one had ever suspected his brother of it. But this uncertainty seemed to be banished when, at the search of Ishâk's quarters, a whole set of paraphernalia for opium-smoking, including used platters, pipes and a sufficient quantity of the manufactured drug, was found in his sitting-room ; for this made it appear as if Ishâk had invited Ismaïl to his room, stupefied him with opium of extra strength, and then knocked him on the head. When the case came before the magistrate it looked dark against the accused man, and its

blackness was increased by his own foolishness in producing an impossible defence. Indian litigants have a craze for proving too much. Many a guilty man has escaped punishment, because the police, in excess of zeal, in order forsooth to strengthen the prosecution, have added false evidence to true, thereby stultifying their own case. Many an innocent man has been convicted, because he has alienated the court's sympathy with gratuitous lies. Ishâk's alibi was like many alibis ; that is, it was true in every particular save one—and that the most important—the exact date. He alleged absence from the town the whole of that fateful evening ; and this was palpably false, since his parents had both admitted discussing the new appointment with him and seeing him leave their presence, in a mood of bitterness and anger, shortly before the blow must have been struck. Ishâk's suicidal defence and suborned evidence actually added to the weight of the prosecution, and he was committed to the court of the Judge for trial on the charge of murder.

.

But while the gossip-mongers were speculating whether the Vice-Chairman would have any son left alive by the end of a month, their attention was distracted by another sensational case. It should be explained that the production, vend and consumption of opium have always been controlled by the British Government ; but in early days the deadly vice of smoking *chandu* and *madak*, as the decoctions of morphine are called, was only restricted, not wholly prohibited, by law. That is to say, a few houses were licensed, where there was an effective demand, in which alone these drugs might be manu-

factured, sold and smoked. The view was taken that men cannot be made virtuous by Act of Parliament, that it is better not to interfere too much with the habits of an oriental people, and that vice, if driven underground, becomes more vicious and less easy to handle. It was not till the middle of the 'nineties that all such licences were cancelled, and the sale, or manufacture for sale, of opium drugs was absolutely prohibited. Since these decoctions require expert preparation, besides an outfit of reeds, discs, platters and lamps, the new law practically made all smoking in private, as well as in public, illegal. But legal or illegal, men who had made a life-long habit of opium must have it ; so illicit dens were secretly opened, often in connection with gambling premises which were equally unlawful, and these were sometimes frequented also by young bloods, as much from bravado as from taste. In the town with which this story is connected there had been only one licensed smoking house, and the licence had been held for many years by one man, Ali Baksh, who had grown old in this pernicious practice. When the new law came in, this man and his cronies surreptitiously continued habits which they were now too old to shake off. Twice Ali Baksh had been caught with his friends, and let off with a warning : but the third time when they were found in the act, he was arrested for illicit possession and vend, and the premises were searched and ransacked. For the prosecution of Ali Baksh Ibrahim was briefed by the Government. The heart-broken father, his favourite boy murdered and his elder son expecting soon to be hanged, had of late appeared little in public ; but now he had to do his

duty in court ; for he was Government prosecutor as well as vice-chairman, and perhaps too he felt some zest for the punishment of a vice which had contributed to the ruin of his sons. But when in presenting the case he called for the articles found in Ali Baksh's opium-den, one of the things produced struck him with a pang of surprise. It was a shirt with an ornate trade-mark on the flap—undoubtedly the new shirt of his son Ismaïl, the shirt he had been wearing a few hours before he was struck down. Ali Baksh admitted that Ismaïl frequented his premises, and had left there his new shirt, which he had taken off to save it from being soiled by the viscous preparations of opium. But he would not confess that he knew anything about the young man's death. The prosecution went on, and the veteran in vice, being now in custody and deprived of opium, grew weak and haggard. On one occasion the magistrate had to hold his court thirty miles away in camp, and when the case was finished for the day, Ali Baksh was in such a state of collapse, that the magistrate had to order opium to be administered in order to keep him alive till he returned to the jail-doctor's care. Eventually he was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for six months. Before he had served a quarter of his sentence, he was dead—chiefly from want of opium. It was true that the drug was given him in jail, but only in diminishing doses and only in eating form ; for it seemed impossible to indulge him with such abominations as *chandu* or *madak* for smoking in a Government institution. Slowly but surely his depraved physique sank and shrank into complete debility. But before he expired some wave of compunction, some return of that conscience which had

so long been suppressed by the fumes of opium, seemed to come over the dying old rascal. For he asked to see a magistrate, and to him he made a sworn statement to the following effect. Ismaïl had been a frequent visitor to his den, and had smoked and gambled daily with him. For both indulgences he owed the old man large sums of money, and when he was appointed octroi-superintendent he was asked to pay up ; but his only response was in the first place to smoke more, in the second to lose larger sums at dice, and in the third to threaten to betray Ali Baksh to the authorities. On the evening which was Ismail's last on earth, the two had had an acute quarrel after their companions had departed, and the young man had swaggeringly declared that, so far from paying any debts or instalments out of his now assured income, he would, if any fuss were made about money, use his newly-acquired official position to turn informer. He then demanded more opium, and moved aside to take off his new shirt, partly in order to save that garment from stains, partly in order to be able to lounge more comfortably. While his back was turned, Ali Baksh, moved by sudden vindictive passion, secretly mixed for him a stupefyingly strong decoction of *chandu*. When he had smoked himself with this into something like delirium, the old man had, at about eleven at night, assisted him out as far as the deserted path, and there clubbed him on the head. He had meant only to rob him, but finding that he had struck harder than he intended, and fearing that the lad might die and he himself be arrested for his murder, he hastened to plant the crime upon Ishâk, by fetching a sufficient quantity of opium and apparatus,

and smuggling them into the brother's room. He knew that suspicion would naturally fall upon Ishâk because of his known hatred of his brother aggravated by the new appointment ; and he succeeded beyond his own designs, when Ismaïl with his dying breath actually named his brother. The psychology of this false accusation is perplexing to a Britisher ; but it must be remembered that malicious intention to damage an enemy is the commonest of motives in the East, and that all moral fibre whatever is sapped by indulgence in morphia or opium smoking. Moreover Ismaïl, when he awoke next morning, had not the slightest recollection of the events of the night, and was chiefly animated by the resolve to keep up appearances to the last and deny all connection with the disreputable vices associated with Ali Baksh's premises. He probably felt he would die easier if he could not only pose as an important public servant, martyred in the execution of his duty, but also plant suspicion if not disaster upon his dearly-hated brother.

Ishâk was of course acquitted; but his father had by now had enough of jobbery, and the post of octroi-superintendent went without a word of protest from the Muhammadan vice-chairman to a Hindu selected from outside by the European chairman. Disappointed a second time of the position which he felt was his due, Ishâk himself sought career and fortune in a distant district. He could no longer feel comfortable with a father who had refused to support his own son's alibi. Like a new Isaac, he had almost been sacrificed once in the cause of truth by his sire, truly a new Abraham ; and perhaps he feared that, should a similar occasion arise, the paternal sacrifice might be fatally and irrevocably consummated !

SATTI

There is nothing about law which is necessarily universal, immutable or sacrosanct : for its general function is to embody and express (usually in the imperative mood) the moral standard accepted by the age and country to which it is applied. The new wine of western jurisprudence cannot be poured undiluted into the old bottles of an eastern society, and in India there have always been special difficulties about enforcing the almost transcendent value which Europe attaches to human life. *Satti** is the ancient institution whereby a Hindu widow voluntarily immolates herself upon the funeral pyre of her husband : it is therefore a practice in which law comes into inevitable conflict with custom and religion. Even Akbar the Mughal, in the time of our Queen Elizabeth, was enlightened enough to prohibit *satti*, and when the British came to India, they could regard such a human sacrifice only with pity, horror and repulsion. On the moral side we execrate its cruelty, its disregard of the sanctity of human life : on the legal side we prohibit it absolutely, and we prosecute the would-be victim herself for attempted suicide and her abettors for murder. But to orthodox Hindu womanhood *Satti* is a supreme sacrament, a beautiful act of reunion with the beloved. The mating of the sexes is the basis of all animate life, and marriage is the basis of human society. All races

* Note.—*Satti* is literally the feminine of a Sanskrit adjective, meaning true, real, faithful.

and ages therefore have woven a web of romance, of exaltation, and even of mysticism, about the wedded state; and the principle of idealism, which we apply to our arts and our morals, has been used to invest the marriage bond with a barrier of religious inviolability. In the west novelists, playwrights and theologians have written of conjugal love as unique, of conjugal union as eternal; in the east, with an heroic completeness of spiritual logic, this mystical idea is carried into practice. And this practice is *satti*. The sacrifice of the widow is not her disgrace, but her triumph; it is rooted not in the degradation of women, but in their glory. Like *parda* or veiling, *satti* has in the past not been thrust upon reluctant womenkind by the more powerful sex; it has been treasured and honoured by the women themselves. Surely it would be almost sacrilege for a widow to go on living in conditions of permanent loneliness and celibacy, when she might, by a supreme act of martyrdom, achieve everlasting union with her soul's mate!

The logic of this is obviously one-sided; for Hindu men do not either destroy themselves when their wives die, or even deny themselves a second marriage: but an ideal does not live on logic; nor is it less of an ideal because it is only half observed.

But this is no true ideal, we exclaim! It is outrageous to deprive a woman of all largeness of life, of every hope and interest not associated with her own husband, her own hearth and family. This enforced celibacy of widows, with its murderous climax in *satti*, belongs to that low stage of civilisation which has refused education to women, has secluded them from the world behind

veils and curtains, has enjoined infant-marriage, and has (in a word) degraded one whole sex to be the slaves and chattels of the other !

All this may be true beyond cavil ; but this is not a moral essay ; it is a sketch from Indian life, though of a life which is now being rapidly disintegrated by the solvent forces of intercourse with Europe.

.

Mussammât Sarsuti was a perfect specimen of Hindu womanhood. Pale of colour and delicate of feature, as a true Brahman should be, she was like a piece of exquisite porcelain, smooth, fragile and moulded in graceful curves. She had had no education, and indeed throughout her short life had scarcely left the house except to bathe in the Ganges, and there pray to the great Mother for a kind husband and for healthy, successful sons. Round these topics had centred all the conversation of the *zanana*, and the great events of her girlhood had been her betrothal and her marriage. For these ceremonies there had been long and elaborate preparations ; first, bargaining for the husband, who must be suitable in birth and externals though unseen by herself ; then much consultation with Brahmans and astrologers, with prayers, offerings, spells and incantations innumerable ; then the purchase, admiration and trial of dresses, the bejewellings, bathings, anointings and lustrations. The mystical ceremony which made her a wife in name was the *biyâh*—really only the betrothal—at which the boy-bridegroom had arrived in a noisy, flamboyant procession, and after some days of feasting, fireworks and *nautches*, had gone back again to his own home. Next came the long

waiting for puberty, diversified only by more priestly ritual, and more purifications of food and water, of body and limb, of ointment and incense. These observances, though strenuous and tiring, were rendered even more thrilling than before by the flatteries and attentions which, in her newly-acquired dignity of wife, were now lavished upon Sarsuti within the *zanana*. Finally, when both bride and bridegroom were old enough, there followed the *gauna*, or ceremony of consummation of marriage, when the young husband came again in procession, and this time took away his wife to live with him.

This was only a few months ago, and Sarsuti was not yet seventeen. Till the calamity came, she was thoroughly happy in her new life and home ; for her husband was the son of a prosperous farmer, and himself enjoyed an ample share in the property jointly owned by the whole family. He was indulgent to the gentle, winning girl who had become his bride ; and the rest of his family (for they lived their life, as well as owning property, in common), gave her the hearty welcome which they felt to be due to her sweet person, no less than to her undeniable ancestry, satisfactory dowry, and rich dresses and jewels.

But then came the terrible, world-wide epidemic of influenza. One by one they were struck down, strong men in the prime of life. There was no time to take all the bodies to the Ganges, and soon there were hardly enough survivors to carry the dead away. Waste places and small streams near at hand had to be used for burning, and the weirs of the canals were sometimes half choked with floating corpses. The autumn crop

had ripened, but there were few to harvest it : the rains had come lavishly, but many a field had to wait unploughed, unsown. Sadly Sarsuti's husband had taken his father's body to the Ganges, and those of his elder brothers to the nearest canal, and then he himself was smitten. The village medicine-man was already dead, he of the nearest town was too busy to come, and there was no dispensary or hospital within ten miles. The bride gently tended her husband, knowing nothing of nursing and giving him everything he asked for. When she saw his body too laid out on the bed, her soul was filled with blank despair, but with despair was also mingled a mystical courage, a high resolve. Not in vain had marriage and motherhood been exalted throughout her girlhood as the sole objects of a woman's life ; but now marriage—on earth—had no more meaning, and motherhood was not for her. Clad in the single coarse white robe of widowhood, she brooded for some hours in silence, and then hastened to consult her few men-folk who still remained, together with their priests and sooth-sayers. The atmosphere was charged with religious fervour, with fanatical rapture, and her mind was soon made up. She could no longer bear the sight of her jewels, which only reminded her of what *had* been, and what *might* have been ; and the sale of these produced sufficient cash to expedite the needful preparations, to ensure quick transport, to buy secrecy. The nearest bend of the Ganges was but a few miles away, and was remote enough to excite no suspicions in the impious. Hither they hurried by night, here they erected a pile of dry logs at least double the usual height. The sooth-sayers mumbled their spells, the priests their divinations;

acolytes laid the body on the pyre and sprinkled oil and spices ; the dead man's next of kin, his head bare-shaven, his limbs clothed in severe white, applied the sacred torch. Then it was that the widow stepped firmly to the pyre, mounted it, and lay down above it by her husband's corpse. Her fair body had been blessed by holy Brahmans, and ceremonially cleansed with incantation and unction. Her soul was exalted with rapturous adoration of the divine Sita, the ever-constant wife of Ram the king, the eternal prototype of Hindu chastity ; and in this ecstasy she was unconscious of the leaping flames. Her spirit was gradually casting away the last-remaining *maya*, or illusion, of the world of sense, and was resting more, ever more, on its longed-for reunion with its mate, its everlasting absorption into the Infinite. Sarsuti had attained to Truth Transcendent : she had become *satti*.

STROPHANTHIN

Hodge, though his name hardly suggests it, was a heaven-born ; nevertheless he was not omniscient ; and when he read the post-mortem report that a fatally large dose of strophanthin had been found in the stomach of the Reverend Mr. Dewby, Methodist missionary, he was mortified to think that he had never even heard of strophanthin. So he consulted the superintendent of the botanical gardens, who told him that strophanthus was an African shrub whose seeds were used by certain savages for poisoning their arrows ; and he also enquired officially from the medical department, which replied that strophanthin, a highly poisonous derivative of the plant, was a cardiac stimulant, which taken in excess would infallibly cause death. Hodge then ordered the investigation to proceed, uncertain whether the cause of Mr. Dewby's sudden end would turn out to be accident, suicide or murder.

.

It is recorded of a certain Roman Emperor that nothing in his life was so becoming to him as his manner of leaving it. Whether this saying was true also of the Reverend Mr. Dewby, can best be judged when a little has been told of his earlier history. The truth is, his real name was Dubé, and he was by birth a pure Indian, a high-caste Brahman. For a Dubé is supposed to be a Pandit who has mastered two of the Vedas, just as a Chaubé is supposed to be one who has mastered all

four Vedas. But names are often misnomers, and the best-known Chaubés in India are probably the celebrated wrestlers of Muttra, while there are hundreds of Dubés who are anything but Sanskrit scholars. The Dubé of this story had indeed studied Sanskrit for his degree ; but he had given little attention to the Hindu scriptures, for the simple reason that he was by birth a Christian. His father had been converted as a young man, and by his real earnestness and piety had risen to be a much respected pastor of the Presbyterian church in Ramnagar. Taught by the Americans of that district to appreciate the great value of education, he had spared no expense on his son's career at school and college. Young Dubé, like many Brahmans, had an agile and enquiring mind, and took his B.A. degree in science as well as literature. His moral equipment however was not equal to his intellectual, and when his old parents desired him to enter the ministry, he bluntly declined to do anything of the kind : for he was at bottom unprincipled and undisciplined, and his attention to his studies was inspired by personal ambition, not by any liking for the service of God or of his fellow-men. The fact is that it is in the second generation that missionaries experience their greatest difficulties. A man genuinely converted to Christianity is often fired by an enduring zeal and conviction : but a child born of Christian parents takes his religious surroundings as a matter of course, goes through conventional services and ceremonies with the boredom of routine, and misses both the fervour of the new religion and the restrictions of the old. This tendency was intensified in young Dubé by his scientific training, and when this led to the

offer of an appointment as inspector in the excise department with prospects of official authority and promotion, he eagerly accepted the post. This was a great blow to the missionaries, who had helped to finance him through their excellent college, and had regarded him as a show pupil; but they consoled themselves by hoping that their highly-educated favourite would at least advance the Christian principles of integrity and clean living in the liquor trade as well as amongst his friends. To further this object, they scoured the Presbyterian missions of India for a suitable wife, and managed to secure from Kashmir a Christian girl of suitable birth, education and accomplishments, whom they carefully piloted in the young man's path on every possible occasion. Dubé met the wishes of his mentors so far as to fall in love with this girl, and marry her; but he met them no further. His education led him amongst free-thinkers, his tastes amongst pleasure-lovers, and his official duties amongst drinkers. His inspections of bars and refreshment-rooms soon included the acceptance of liquor constantly pressed upon him; and from testing spirits it was a short step to tasting them. Tippling led to other haunts of indulgence and vice, while official authority led to temptation, and that to corruption. His wife was amiable, domesticated, and attentive to religious observances; but these qualities had no power to hold the young hot-blood back from the liquor-shops and the dissipations of the bazar. They drifted apart, and she soon left him to visit her own people in Kashmir. To save appearances she returned two or three times to Ramnagar, but always complained of neglect, ill-treatment and even violence.

Permanent separation presently followed, and before long Mrs. Dubé obtained the divorce, for which her husband had given frequent and flagrant cause. This scandal, preceded as it had been by several censures for gambling and intemperance, could not escape departmental notice, and the official climax was reached when a grave case of the corrupt use of authority had to be formally enquired into. Dubé, lying under suspension and fearing the worst, thought it better to send in his resignation and to decamp precipitately. It was understood vaguely that he had gone to some native state in southern India, and he was never heard of again in or near Ramnagar.

.

How Dubé spent the next decade will never be known ; but certain it is that during that period he managed to acquire a sedate manner, a black clerical coat, and some milk-and-water credentials from an obscure Methodist mission in one of the southern presidencies. Armed with these, he became a pioneer of the struggling mission of Bandipur, and worked it up with some success, or at any rate plausibility. Hodge the Collector, had sometimes wondered at the glibness and facility with which the Reverend Mr. Dewby, as he was now called, stood security for a colony of hereditary criminals, who had nominally embraced Christianity in order to escape the unpleasant attentions of the police. But he knew nothing against the man, and was mildly pleased when the new pastor married one of his own converts and rose in dignity and influence. The mission seemed harmless and well enough conducted, and its minister, though he had an

unhealthy appearance and complained of heart-weakness, was quiet and unobtrusive. But two years later Hodge was shocked to receive a report that the reverend gentleman had died suddenly in his sleep in the night ; not only that, but a fellow-pastor had been telegraphed for, had come hot-foot to Bandipur, and had accomplished the burial. The assistant surgeon had been sent for to see the body, but had refused to give a certificate of the cause of death ; and very rightly so, since neither he nor any other medical man had either attended Mr. Dewby in life or been present at his last moments ; and it was impossible to certify anything without a post-mortem examination. He had been in his ordinary health up to the day before, and even his wife knew of no illness except occasional palpitations of the heart, for which he took strophanthin when he felt inclined. Nevertheless Mrs. Dewby without any medical certificate and without waiting for official permission, had hurried her husband's body underground, and had even arranged for some sort of religious ceremony. This indecent haste, added to ugly rumours about the dead man's harshness to his wife and her jealousy of his attentions to the mission girls, excited Hodge's grave suspicions, and he promptly ordered the body to be disinterred, and submitted to autopsy by the civil surgeon. Whether this order was within his legal powers or required higher authority Hodge was not quite sure ; but officials in India have to take responsibility, even when young and officiating ; and in a case like this there was no time to be lost by referring to Government manuals or reporting to superiors for sanction. So the body was dug up and opened, and a large quantity

of strophanthin was found in the stomach, proving that the death had been unnatural, and therefore amply justifying the disinterment. As to how the fatal dose came to be swallowed, the widow maintained it could only have been by accident. Her husband, she said, had no reason to take his own life, being in no particular distress of body or mind. On that evening, however, he had retired early to sleep in his dressing-room, complaining of worse palpitations and headache than usual, and saying he would take some strophanthin before resting. He always dosed himself, being rather proud of his scientific knowledge, and she could only suggest that he had inadvertently taken an over-dose. The police, on the other hand, favoured the theory of murder by his wife ; for two of the mission girls had complained of his improper advances to them, and the servants stated that quarrels on this account between husband and wife had been growing daily acuter. But Mrs. Dewby's quiet and rather religious character seemed to Hodge to make the murder theory improbable ; and presently clues of another kind appeared from a search of the deceased pastor's private effects. In the first place native silver ornaments were found, locked in his private safe, — ornaments undoubtedly stolen in a recent dacoity by the criminal tribe which, being nominally Christian, Dewby had corruptly befriended. These looked like his price for protecting the thieves ; and the minister may well have feared exposure, since the police had almost traced the destination of the jewellery, and had been approaching the clerical receiver with embarrassing questions. Other discoveries were an unpaid bill for a dozen of brandy, and several empty phials which

had once contained cocaine. Finally they found a letter from his official superior in the Methodist church saying that his behaviour with the female converts had come to his attention ; and an even more peremptory communication from the mission's headquarters in America, demanding an immediate explanation of a large defalcation of charitable funds. These circumstances made it certain that the minister had been on the very verge of a disgraceful downfall, which would inevitably have led to imprisonment and ruin : and if any doubt remained, it was removed when the Indian pastor who had conducted the funeral produced a letter of recent date, in which Dewby complained of prostration of body and despair of mind, and, broadly hinting that he did not expect to live long, begged his friend to hasten to bury him in the event of his sudden decease. This friend, who apparently suspected nothing of Dewby's real character or evil habits, believed that this request was inspired only by a sentimental horror of post-mortem examination,—a repulsion which he himself shared ; so when the climax came, he hastened to celebrate the funeral before there was time for an autopsy. But Dewby's real intention was undoubtedly to take his own life, while at the same time providing that the cause of his death should be attributed to illness, overwork, or accident. Hypocrite and poseur to the end, he consoled himself, as he swallowed his last potion of dope, with the flattering unction that he would receive honourable Christian obsequies, and be lamented as a martyr who had fallen at the post of duty. Thus it was, by the incalculable irony of destiny, that the perverseness of ingenuity, which had characterised his whole

life, coloured and distorted also the circumstances of his death. The insincerity, self-indulgence and disregard of the feelings of others, which had animated his whole career, not only accompanied him to his grave, but rose again therefrom, as if to cover his memory with deathless scorn and dishonour. The body which he had pampered and drugged without limit, emerged from its refuge in the dust, to be mangled, to be mutilated, to have its remotest and best-hidden secrets ruthlessly exposed before the searching gaze of Truth.

THE GIRL OF GREAT PRICE

The birth of twins is sufficiently uncommon in all countries, and in India it is especially rare. It must also be admitted that, even in that philoprogenitive race, it is not always a very welcome event. But to Lâla Moti Râm, who was a prosperous money-lender with no offspring living, it was a memorable and happy day when his wife successfully gave birth to twins, a fine boy and a fine girl. It is true that she had had three or four babies before this ; but all of them had died at or soon after birth, as the direct and preventable result of old-fashioned ceremonies, ignorance of the rules of diet, insanitary surroundings, and the customary antipathy to fresh air. But Moti Râm, though conservative by instinct, was not too proud to profit by experience, and on this occasion he consented in a patronising manner, not only to calling in the lady-doctor, but even to carrying out a few of her instructions. Cautious by nature, he resolved to take no further risks, but to give his son and daughter every reasonable chance of growing up to health and maturity. For he realised that fatherhood was necessary alike to his dignity as a citizen, his worldly prosperity and his spiritual welfare. These three objects interacted upon one another. The accumulation of a large fortune was of course the main motive of his life ; for this not only added to his present importance and comfort, but would also facilitate the acquisition of merit by means of lavish charities and

religious offerings towards the end of his life. But it seemed infructuous to heap up riches, if he had no heir to inherit them ; and moreover in his childless condition the Brahmans had for some time past been urging him to build a new temple with a view to the peace of his soul. From a mundane point of view, he felt, it would be much less expensive to have a son of his own, than to erect a costly and imposing temple : from a spiritual point of view, too, it would probably be much more efficacious. He therefore bent himself to the careful education and nurture of his son, whom he called Dhanpat Lâl ; and brought him up to inherit the principles, business and fortune of his father. The family was Banya by caste, and young Dhanpat Lâl showed great aptitude for the hereditary mysteries. He was taught to keep accounts in *Mahâjani*, a script intelligible only to *Mahâjans* or money-dealers ; to keep double sets of ledgers, one for himself and the other for the courts and the income-tax officers ; to lend money at 25 per cent on good security and at 50 or even 75 per cent on bad ; to exact higher interest on short loans to the poor and thriftless, and lower on long advances to substantial clients ; to combine with other Banyas for their common advantage, and to the discomfiture of the cultivator on one side and the consumer on the other ; to buy grain in large quantities at harvest when the farmer is forced to sell cheap in order to pay his rent, and to sell it at double the price after the rains when he *must* have seed, at any sacrifice, in order to sow his fields ; to foreclose a mortgage of land at the precise moment when the owner cannot be squeezed any longer ; and then to screw up the rents to the uttermost, and at the same time to

pose before the authorities as an hereditary member of the landed aristocracy. These agreeable lessons Dhanpat Lâl absorbed with avidity, and he was even more delighted when his father initiated him into a new and lucrative business devised by himself. This consisted of gambling with the public on the price of opium in Calcutta. Every month Government offers to auction a certain number of chests of opium, and these are bid for by the recognised brokers, the price per chest running into some thousands of Rupees. Moti Râm knew little of opium and cared less ; but he invented a system of gambling on the last figure of the average price accepted by the authorities in Calcutta. As there are ten digits, the chance against any particular one being the last figure was exactly nine to one. But Moti Râm's clients knew nothing of mathematical odds ; and when they were offered six or even seven to one against the digit fancied by themselves or prognosticated by their favourite priest, their greed made them fall into the trap and accept the bet. Every month hundreds and even thousands of Rupees were staked by ignorant peasants, who loved a little flutter when they came to the big town for business, pleasure or religious pilgrimage ; and every month Moti Râm, supported by his hopeful son, made a huge profit without the slightest trouble. It was not necessary to fudge the figures or delay payments : the firm received telegrams from Calcutta indicating the prices bid for each chest ; and these were made public, so that the crowd of gamblers could calculate the average and verify the winning digit. The rejoicings of the few who won considerable sums at six to one easily drowned the lamentations of the many who lost, in the aggregate,

far larger amounts. Disappointed losers who returned month after month to restore their broken fortunes, were almost as good an advertisement as winners who boasted of their luck and came back with envious friends resolved to back, and again to back, their favourite numbers. The business grew, and a few cases of destitution and ruin which came to the notice of the authorities stimulated them to expose the swindle, and to institute a test prosecution in the courts. But though the statute book includes an Opium Act and a Gambling Act, the prosecution failed, though it was fought up to the High Court. The former Act had nothing to do with the case, and the latter prohibited gambling only in a "public place" or in a "common gaming house." Moti Râm's premises and courtyard were held to be not a "public place"; and as for a "common gaming house" glib lawyers proved with a wealth of argument and precedent that this presupposed "instruments of gaming." So the learned advocates left the High Court with full pockets, and Moti Râm with a clear conscience and an unstained reputation; while his son bought an enormous turban and a beautiful new suit of pink silk, and started a branch gambling establishment to attract customers in another part of the town.

.

But if Dhanpat Lâl was the pride of his father's business, his twin sister, Lakhpatia, was the adornment of their home. She grew up strong, merry and well-favoured, and Moti Râm loved and petted and indulged her. Like all Orientals, of course, he regarded a girl chiefly as a potential wife and mother; but he was not the man to allow domestic affection to dominate the

leading motive of his class and character, viz., avarice ; and he was quite determined that his daughter's charms and position should be a source of profit. Other castes often find daughters an expensive luxury, and have to put down large dowries, as well as the cost of elaborate ceremonies, before they can see them safely and suitably married. But Banya fathers usually contrive to receive wedding presents, instead of giving them ; and Moti Râm's business, wealth and reputation stood so high, that he hoped by judicious bargaining, to get thirty if not forty thousand Rupees as the price of his daughter's hand. A rich husband of good Banya caste was of course essential ; and Lakhpata's position as an heiress, added to her beauty and education (she had received excellent instruction for almost nothing in a Mission school), must inevitably attract plenty of eligible suitors. So it turned out. Moti Râm had many promising conversations with stout comfortable fathers of hopeful sons, and much astute calculation went on on both sides. He was in no hurry ; he did not believe in very early marriages ; and he considered that his daughter's attractions, and therefore pecuniary value, went up as her bodily and mental development proceeded. So it was not till the twins were nearly sixteen years of age, that the bargain was clinched. Lâla Bahâdur Lâl was the owner of over a *lakh* of Rupees and the usufructuary mortgagee of three villages. He promised to put down twenty-five thousand Rupees, and to settle one village on the girl. His son Munshi Râm had passed the matriculation, and hoped soon to blossom into a civil court pleader—qualifications which were appraised at several thousand Rupees. Ten thousand Rupees were paid

to Moti Râm in cash by Bahâdur Lâl, who undertook to produce the balance on the wedding-day, and also to contribute five thousand towards the marriage expenses. So the old men went off to consult their *pandits* and astrologers about an auspicious date for the ceremonies, each well content with his bargain. But they had reckoned without the girl, who now, to everyone's surprise, suddenly developed a will of her own—the result, no doubt, partly of being spoilt at home, partly of being taught at school to be independent and think for herself. It is true that she said nothing when her father, pompously but affectionately, announced the destiny he had designed for her. But while the long negotiations with the soothsayers were dragging on, Lakhpataia unexpectedly eloped with a young man called Bhagwati Prasâd, who was understood to have gone through a form of marriage with her according to the enlightened, but unorthodox, rites of the Arya Samâj. Lâla Moti Râm was furious ; for Bhagwati Prasâd was only a flashy junior clerk with no property or prospects, and was thoroughly ineligible. So when the young couple coolly ignored his expostulations and messages, the embittered money-lender rushed into the magistrate's court, and filed a complaint of kidnapping. Now the age of consent in India is sixteen, so that unless a girl is below that age, no charge of kidnapping from lawful custody will lie. Here therefore was a clear issue, here was an opportunity for the lawyers ;—was Lakhpataia above or below sixteen ? Indians as a rule are quite vague about age, and keep no records of births or birth-days. Moti Râm swore that his daughter was under sixteen ; the girl insisted that she was older. The court

of course would demand evidence on the subject ; so, with the touching faith—so common in India—in the infallibility of the “ expert,” both parties hurried to the civil surgeon, supported by pleaders and armed with large fees. Lakhpattia, who was well-developed for her years, dressed and made herself up to look as old as possible, and after examination the civil surgeon gave a written opinion that she was over sixteen. Moti Râm took her twin-brother, attired as simply and boyishly as possible, to the same “ expert,” who after examination gave a written opinion that he was not yet fifteen. Exultantly each party appeared in court, and produced with a flourish of triumph the certificate which must surely win his case for him. The magistrate, though he was too wise to accept as gospel any “ expert ” opinion on such a matter as this, and though he considered that his own judgment as to a person’s age was as valuable as any doctor’s opinion, called the civil surgeon into court for examination and cross-examination. This unhappy official who had perfectly honestly (albeit for large fees) examined the boy and girl on separate occasions and in complete ignorance that they were admittedly twins, was now confronted with two contradictory opinions signed by himself, and could only evade the most damaging cross-examination by falling back upon technical terms and learned explanations about teeth, skin, and organic development. Suborned and evidently false evidence was piled up on both sides, and the lawyers revelled in numerous adjournments and prolix arguments. In the end the magistrate simply recorded that the girl looked over sixteen to him, and was in any case mature enough to know her own mind ;

and leaving it at that, he found the charge of kidnapping in the legal sense unproved.

So Lakhpatia went back to Bhagwati Prasâd's home and protection, and Moti Râm, with lightened pockets but heavy heart, returned to brood over the bargain which he could not now fulfil. He was not left in peace for long. Lâla Bahâdur Lâl immediately pressed him for the ten thousand Rupees he had advanced, with interest at 25 per cent. Moti Râm offered to pay the interest at $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent, but explained that the principal was locked up for the time in grain transactions, and that the lawyers in the kidnapping case had taken all his available cash. The ten thousand, he said, had been advanced to cultivators for seed which was now but germinating and would yield nothing for six months, and not even then unless good winter rains fell shortly. Bahâdur Lâl retorted that the cultivators would ultimately pay interest at 50 or 75 per cent., that Moti Râm could easily borrow cash, and that if he were sued for the ten thousand, the civil court proceedings would mean more lawyers' fees and heavy costs. But Moti Râm preferred to bluff and procrastinate, with the result that Bahâdur Lâl brought and won his case, with costs and interest at $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, and one of Moti Râm's shops was attached in execution of the decree.

Nor was this the last of the litigation centering round Lakhpatia. That attractive young woman was contented enough with Bhagwati Prasâd for a few months, while in the first flush of fascination he loaded her with compliments and—still more gratifying—with jewellery. But after a year or so his credit and resources came to

an end, and their mutual affection began to break down under the strain of poverty and obscurity. The veneer of courtship was wearing thin, and during his long hours of office drudgery she yearned for companionship, her education having been enough to make her discontented, but not enough to give satisfying occupation to her lonely days. Her own people were relentless, and she was permanently estranged from them ; but her independence of spirit and attractiveness of person brought her in contact with undesirable admirers ; with one of whom, Nathu by name, she incontinently eloped about eighteen months after her marriage, taking on her person all the jewellery she could lay hands on. Bhagwati Prasâd, who was already tiring of his wife, might have borne her absence with equanimity ; but he could not reconcile himself to the loss of all the gold and silver ornaments which he had heaped upon her in early days. An Indian tends to regard his wife as his bank and her jewels as his capital ; and it was Bhagwati Prasâd's suggestion to sell some of his wife's bangles in order to pay off part of the debts incurred in their purchase, which had finally determined Lakhpattia to run away with a richer man. So the aggrieved husband now sought to prosecute Nathu for abducting a married woman, and another acrimonious struggle was started in the courts. To begin with, the validity of the unorthodox marriage was called in question ; and when after much trouble and expense the magistrate was satisfied on this point, the girl herself had vanished, and a warrant of arrest had to be issued. When she was finally traced, Nathu probably thought the game was up ; for he approached Bhagwati Prasâd with a compromise,

which the latter after much bargaining accepted, preferring the certainty of half the jewellery to the possibility of the whole. In the result Lakhpatia remained with Nathu, but with only half of her valuables—a circumstance which considerably disgusted her new lover. This man was in reality a disreputable scoundrel, and the poor girl's life with him must have been one of increasing unhappiness and shame. How long it continued is unknown; for from this point onwards all respectable society, including her own people, completely lost sight of her. Lakhpatia, once a wealthy father's darling, once coveted as a bride by all the best young men of her caste, once the object of matrimonial bargaining between sleek plutocrats, once a "girl of great price," was now a castaway, alienated, almost forgotten.

.

Meantime Moti Râm and his son were trying to smother their mortification and restore their damaged fortune by increased attention to the business of opium-gambling; and this continued to gain in popularity, until it was suppressed by the introduction of a municipal bye-law which made it illegal. But before it came to an end, there were several tragedies involving the ruin and even death of reckless speculators. Perhaps the most dramatic of these was the discovery of a young woman's dead body lying outside Moti Râm's own front door. She had died of poison administered by herself; she was emaciated and penniless, and her clothes, though of rich quality, were dirty and ragged. In her pockets was found nothing but half a dozen betting-tickets—tickets bearing numbers which had failed to win in Moti Râm's swindling lottery. When the

money-lender uncovered her face, he recognised Lakhpatia, his own daughter. She had taken her life in front of her father's doorway, laying her body at the porch in such a manner (*dharna*), that according to Hindu superstition, the guilt of causing her death might be placed to her father's account, and so bring unceasing torment to his soul !

A VICTIM OF POLITICS

Most villages in northern India include a colony of Chamârs, or low-caste labourers ; and thirty years ago these men were despised, down-trodden, almost untouchable,—the fags and serfs of the community. They were never allowed to purchase land, and seldom to rent it ; they had no opportunity, or desire, for education ; they were made to do menial work for the landholders for little or no wages, and thrashed if they did not do it ; they lived on the outskirts of the village among the rubbish-heaps and unsavoury patches of waste land. Many of these conditions still persist, but some degree of awakening has taken place among the labouring classes, and one potent cause of enlightenment has lain in the opportunity arranged by the British Government for the emigration of coolies to some of the tropical colonies. Towards the end of the last century Baggu, a young Chamâr living in these sordid surroundings, in a village in the Ganges valley, heard of these openings, and went with his young wife to Cawnpore to be recruited. Being strong and healthy, they had no difficulty in satisfying the civil surgeon ; and though they were a little nervous before the joint magistrate, who searchingly catechised them as to their character and above all their thorough acquaintance with the conditions and wages of the work they would have to do and the detailed terms of their indentures, they easily proved their *bona fides*, intelligence

and willingness ; and after a further ordeal before the Protector of Emigrants at Calcutta, the young couple were soon on their way to Fiji—the *tâpu* or island of their ambitions. In that colony they spent twenty years of happy and highly lucrative agricultural labour. Their wages were double or treble what they would have been able to earn in India, they enjoyed the soft climate and novel conditions, they brought up a small family, and they were able not only to send many remittances home to their village in India, but also to save up a considerable sum in cash. Towards the end of their prosperous career in Fiji, the islands were visited by a few agitators—apparently lawyer-politicians from India, who asked how they could possibly endure such humiliating conditions of what they were pleased to call “slavery.” But Baggu and his wife knew better than to listen to these suggestions. It was true that they were treated rather like school-boys. They could not go “out of bounds” except with permission, they could not leave their very decent barracks at night, they had to work nine or ten fixed hours every day, and of course they were not permitted by their indentures to return to India until the period of years agreed upon had expired. But then they were so comfortable that they did not *want* to leave their life’s work until they had saved enough to buy some land at home ; their houses (provided free) and wages were vastly superior to those in their native village ; and they were not beaten or locked up unless they misbehaved themselves ; and even then the punishments were not so severe as the ill-treatment of Chamârs in India. As to “rights of citizenship,” “equality of status,” and the “dignity

of Indians," they knew and cared nothing about these things either in Fiji or in the mother-land.

After completing the ten years of their indentures, Baggu and his wife willingly contracted for a further ten years, at the end of which they availed themselves of the free passages to which they were entitled, and went home with their family, comfortable in the possession of several hundred rupees. With this money Baggu bought a nice little farm in his native village (an unusual achievement for a Chamâr even in these days) and settled down to enjoy the position and dignity of a small landed proprietor. Most of his fields were irrigated by the Ganges canal, and he anticipated no severe anxieties even in the event of drought. But after a few years the rains suddenly failed, and as suddenly the distributary which served his land ceased to carry any water. The canal itself was unaccountably low, and it took Baggu some time and repeated journeys to headquarters, to irrigation officers and even to the headworks of the great canal itself, before he discovered the reason. This was not the shortness of the monsoon, for the Ganges is snow-fed, and the winter snow-fall on the Himalayas had been above normal. The cause of the shortage was that a square aperture had been constructed in the masonry dam so as to ensure a constant stream down the river itself. This aperture was never closed, however much water was needed in the canal, so that the discharge was permanently reduced, and half a million acres of irrigable land were suddenly and for ever deprived of canal-water. The change had been manoeuvred by a group of politician busy-bodies, whose real motive was public notoriety and ambition, but who masked this

under the cover of religion. Hindu beliefs, they said, demanded that Mother Ganges should have a continuous stream from source to mouth, unhampered by dams, uncontaminated by masonry. Rajas were urged to join deputations in the sacred cause of the divine mother ; priests who officiated at places of pilgrimage on the Ganges banks were induced to agitate for more water ; high authorities were moved ; emotional speeches were delivered ; the ultra-Hindu press was solicited ; solemn conferences were convened by exalted officials. Amid all this agitation the thousands of poor cultivators, who were to lose the precious water which was the life of their fields, were forgotten. They were just as good Hindus as the politicians, far more devout than the rajas, truer lovers of Mother Ganges than any exalted authority could ever hope to be. They also knew perfectly well that the water supply of the lower reaches of the Ganges depended far less upon the amount passing over the weir at the head-works, than upon the innumerable side streams and torrents and the percolation in the bed of the river itself. They could have testified that however much water was diverted high up into the canal, the volume at the lower bathing-places remained much the same, because Mother Ganges reinforced herself from her own tributaries and her own channel. But the silent cultivators had few spokesmen except the irrigation officials, who, when they cited these facts and pleaded for a full supply for their beloved canal, in the interest alike of the cultivator, of the wealth of the country, and of the public revenue in the shape of irrigation fees, were considered iconoclastic, irreligious, and materialistic,—worse still bureaucratic,

—worst of all unsympathetic ! The utmost that the apostles of efficiency could prevail against those of “religion in danger” was to arrive as a compromise, whereby an aperture should be provided, but an aperture much smaller than the politicians were clamouring for. But even reduced as it was, this permanent outlet meant a permanent loss, and deprived whole tracts of irrigation.

“Delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi.”

Among many sufferers Baggu was not the least ; for his soil was light and porous, he had bought and paid for it as irrigable, and he possessed no well. In vain he petitioned the Collector and the canal officials. They could do nothing, since the gods, both of the Hindu religion and of the Simla hierarchy, had spoken : there was now no more water to be had ; so the land must go dry, and take its chance of the monsoon. This was very discouraging to Baggu ; for the lack of irrigation not only diminished the yield of his fields, but reduced the amount of labour which could profitably be spent on them ; so that there was no longer useful employment on the farm for both of his sons, now strapping lads of 16 and 18 respectively. But Baggu was a man of resource, and he was resolved that whatever happened, his sons should not relapse into the old despised condition of village serfs. The elder boy, Maiku, had a keen and pleasurable recollection of Fiji, where wages were high and the climate was free from the biting cold weather, which bears so hardly upon the poor in northern India—that country of extremes in heat and cold. So Baggu took Maiku to Cawnpore and applied for his recruitment to Fiji. To their disappointment they found that all indentured labour for that colony had now been stopped. The

politicians had stigmatised the system as one of slavery, unworthy of the dignity of India. Carpet-baggers had visited the island and reported that the coolies had insufficient freedom and no civil rights, but were confined like prisoners and chastised like school-boys. Wires had been pulled, meetings held, and propaganda agitated. The grievances and indignities alleged to be suffered by Indians in the British colonies had been piteously debated in the council room of Simla, pressed upon the Secretary of State, passed on by him to the Colonial Office, and even mooted and condemned in conferences in London. As a result the door of advancement and prosperity was banged in the face of many an enterprising labourer who longed for a freer and wider life; and Fiji, the island or *tâpu* to Baggu of success, to Maiku of ambition, and to both of affection, was effectually closed to them both. Of course *free* emigration was still allowed; but how could a poor Chamâr arrange and pay for his own passage? and how could he face a new country without any official protection, without a definite contract to support him?

There remained Assam, however: the tea-gardens there always wanted Indian coolies. So Maiku, still full of youthful hope, found his way to Assam, where he easily obtained excellent employment. The conditions on the tea-estates were good enough; a labourer got four to six annas for work which he could finish in half a day, and there was the same rate of pay for over-time, to say nothing of free house and medical attendance. Cloth too and rice and grain, which rose to famine prices during the War, were sold to garden-coolies under contract at rates 30 or 40 per cent below

those prevailing in the bazar. Maiku liked the balmy climate, settled down to hard sober work, found that he could comfortably save money, and began to hope that Assam after all might prove a satisfactory substitute for Fiji, the *tâpu* of his dreams. But even here came the agitators—venal stump-orators who fomented discontent, inflamed racial hatred, organised political meetings, and spread lying rumours that British rule was at an end and a Brahman *raj* was being established in India. Strikes led to riots, and these to definite attacks on masters and Europeans. Maiku, having no grievance of his own, for some time held aloof ; but he was soon dragged in with others, at first unwillingly, later with increasing eagerness, as his credulity, racial pride, jealousy, and cupidity were astutely played upon. When it came to violence and even bloodshed, his high spirits led him to the front, and in the burnings and shootings which followed he was injured, arrested and prosecuted. The agitators who had called into being the forces of disorder, vanished before the assertion of authority, and Maiku and his comrades were left to face their punishment. When he came out of jail, his career in Assam was ruined ; so he worked his way back as far as Calcutta, which offered ample employment in the jute mills on ten annas a day. He would fain have avoided the demoralising city atmosphere, and he even made further enquires as to Fiji, his beloved *tâpu*. But the answer was the same : indentured emigration to the colonies was dead ; the politicians had killed it !

.

In Calcutta Maiku drifted still lower. The political influences of discontent and non-cooperation, which

had only touched the fringe of Assam, had here penetrated deep. The labouring classes, losing all sense of discipline, were ready to break adrift at the slightest grievance ; and half-educated apostles of *swarâj* played upon them, as a street musician plays upon a squeaky fiddle. Maiku was more than once forced against his will to go on strike, and he suffered with the rest from politically inspired *hartâls*, when shops and places of business were compulsorily shut by organised picketting. Before long he got into trouble with the police ; but he soon found that striking and rioting were so lightly punished, that it paid better to join the ranks of disorder than to stick loyally to his work. Why a strike should have been ordered the moment the Prince of Wales landed in India he could not conceive ; for the British *Shâhzâda* was said to be a splendid fellow, and there would certainly be festivities and jollifications and *tamâshas* when he came to Calcutta. But since Maiku was forced out of work, he could only do as others did ; and splendid freedom and luxury were being promised by the mob-orators to everyone, if only the rich and wicked English could be driven out of India. So he accepted five annas a day and his food as hire for joining a band of hooligans, who demonstrated through the streets, raised cheers at the dictation of *swarâj* leaders, and intimidated the employees of places of business and public institutions. This was great fun, and often there were opportunities for loot. Several times they coerced the lamp-lighters and left the streets in darkness ; once or twice when a hateful capitalist's warehouse was burning, they stoned the fire-brigade and dragged steam-rollers across the road to prevent the fire-engines from approaching the

flames. These were exciting and lucrative days, but their continuance was uncertain : so Maiku was rather glad when he was invited to join a " Khilâfat volunteer corps." This sounded imposing and more or less permanent, and though the pay was only five annas a day, he would get a uniform, and that would mean authority and pickings. Of course, he was not a Muhammadan, and he had not the smallest idea who the Khalîfa was, or what the Khilâfat meant ; but that did not seem to matter to his employers ; all he was required to do was to march and demonstrate in the streets, to picket shops when *hartâls* were ordered, to attend rowdy meetings and pretend to keep order, and to bear the brunt in case the police interfered. The risk of personal injury he did not mind ; for he had pluck and high spirits, and after all the hospitals were comfortable enough. The risk of arrest, too, was not very alarming ; for one could generally get off with a light sentence, or at any rate with lenient treatment in jail on the score of being a political offender. But there are some things which British authorities, however long-suffering, will not overlook, and one of these is homicide : so it was unfortunate for Maiku that in one of these encounters with the police his excitement ran away with him, and he murderously attacked an officer who was dispersing a prohibited and extremely dangerous meeting held in the vicinity of the banks. Maiku's luck had held pretty well of late, but now it gave way ; for the officer proceeded most inconsiderately to die of his wounds, and his assailants were prosecuted for murder. As one of the paid agitators—a half-educated firebrand—was also tried for abetment, expensive advocates were briefed

by the politicians for the defence, and the nationalist press also intervened with lurid articles about "martyrs";—by which word they meant, not the brave Bengali officer who had died doing his duty, not the widow and young family whom he left to mourn his loss, but the reckless and disreputable blackguards who had caused or instigated his death. However, the facts were too strong even for the politicians and lawyers, and Maiku and his companions were sentenced to transportation for life.

And so it came about that the humble but enterprising Chamâr, who had long yearned to emigrate from India, was grimly destined to do so : he who from boyhood upwards had hoped for a career of useful labour on a distant island or *tâpu*, was fated to have his desire. But his emigration was not that of a free honourable labourer ; it was banishment to a convict settlement : the *tâpu* for which he was bound was not Fiji ; it was the Andaman Islands !

THE SARJU BRIDGE

In most parts of the world the building of a bridge is a comparatively straightforward operation. It may be costly, it may be laborious, it may be dangerous ; but the engineering problem itself is simple. There are two banks and a waterway ; it is necessary merely to connect the former and to span the latter. There is an exact science of loads, of strains and of stresses ; and questions of mechanical construction can be worked out by pure mathematics. But the problem of bridging a great river in the alluvial plains of India is complicated by incalculable factors. The bed and banks are made of detritus disintegrated from the mountains, and this is constantly changing ; the volume of water to be provided for varies every year with the monsoon and the melting of inaccessible snows ; the Indian character subordinates the thoroughness which will endure for the future to an outward appearance which is gratifying in the present, so that labourers tend to scamp their work if possible, and contractors to use inferior material if it is cheaper. Above all, the vagaries of the river itself are beyond all human calculation. For thirty years it may flow serenely down one channel ; then suddenly it will burst its banks and carve out a new bed five or ten miles away : season after season, silent and unsuspected, it will undermine a precipice apparently solid, and then on some boisterous night whole fields and habitations will slide into the river, which will use

this new material to form great shelving sand-banks a hundred miles below. And so when the huge railway bridge over the powerful Sarju was built, the piers, girders, rivets and spans, though the most showy, were not the most intricate part of the operations. Even more important were the protective works stretching for miles up-stream. It would be useless to spend crores of Rupees on a massive pile of arches, steel and masonry, if the river were some day to abandon its channel, leave the bridge high and dry above islands and sandbanks, and force a new passage through the railway embankment miles away to the north or south. The Sarju must be trained to flow permanently down its proper bed under the bridge, and all vulnerable spots in its banks higher up must be protected with spurs, buttresses and pitching of boulders and masonry.

Barry, superintending engineer, as he watched the approaching completion of his *magnum opus*, the Sarju bridge project, the work which had occupied the four best years of his life, was particularly careful to examine the details of these protective works. He was a capable engineer, with a passion for thoroughness, and an incurable impatience of oriental slovenliness. Lâla Kâmta Prasâd, executive engineer in the temporary service, was his chief assistant; and neither he nor any of his army of subordinates had ever been able to understand Barry's amazing attention to foundations which would never be seen, and to the exact quality of lime and cement which were to be hidden for ever in inconspicuous portions of the work. Their chief's seeming preference of hot ravines and dismal gritty sandbanks to the more spectacular portions of the bridge

itself, could only be attributed, they thought, to his unintelligible Irish *mizâj* or temperament,—the same *mizâj* which produced his fiery temper and scathing rebukes. Many times in the past he had insisted on whole piers or spurs being dismantled and reconstructed on account of defects which were never likely to show, and had ruthlessly penalized contractors who failed to work up to specification. Twice or thrice quite recently he had called for Kâmta Prasâd's explanation for passing inferior bricks and concrete, and one such demand still hung unanswered over the executive engineer's head. That officer in fact was feeling very much aggrieved. Coming of a family of aggressive nationalists, who were always clamouring that high posts should be given to Indians, he had received his temporary appointment for political reasons, and he valued it quite as much for the opportunities of patronage which it offered, as for the importance that it added to his position or for the perquisites which it added to his purse. The contractors who had suffered were his own nominees and relatives, and the condemnation of their work was a severe blow to his own vanity, prestige and pocket. He was wondering how best he could reassert his own dignity, and retaliate upon his chief—whether by organising a strike among the labourers or by instigating the contractors to agitate for higher rates —, when an unexpected opportunity occurred.

Barry was paying a surprise visit to the works highest up the stream, meaning to spend the night in a temporary inspection bungalow built on the river bank twelve miles above the bridge. He was already irritated because he had found a revetment wall which collapsed when

he put all his great weight against it, and now he was digging viciously between some bricks with his pocket knife. "Curse that Kâmta Prasâd," he muttered, as pieces of dust and rubble flew out revealing the absence of lime between the bricks; "this comes of putting in his confounded brothers-in-law as contractors! I wonder how many relatives he has in the trade. Bad scan to them all!" Presently he hurried on to the bungalow, his body tired with a long day in the sun, and his temper all on edge after the bad work he had seen. As he burst unceremoniously into the living room, he was astonished to see Kâmta Prasâd already there, lounging in a long-armed chair under the punkah, with his feet on the mantelpiece, and a glass at his elbow. The room reeked with the heavy odour of *pan* and betel-nut, red stains of which had been expectorated all over the floor. Fragments of fruit lay scattered about, the verandah had been used as a temporary kitchen, everything was dirty, and the bathroom was in a state baffling description.

Barry, already irritated, was roused to passion by this spectacle of his subordinate reclining at ease, neglecting his work, and defiling the bungalow with oriental habits. "Blast you, Kâmta Prasâd," he burst out; "don't you know that officers who live in these houses have to live in European fashion and keep them decent? There is the rule hung up, signed by yourself. You have made the place absolutely uninhabitable!"

Kâmta Prasâd tried to protest sulkily and not without a touch of impertinence: but his chief was too angry to listen, and rushed into a stream of quite unrepeatable invective. He even raised his riding-whip

threateningly ; whereat his assistant, who was a coward, made good his escape, jumped on to his bicycle, and rode off quickly to the next bungalow, half way to the bridge. Barry, left alone, soon cooled down ; and feeling that he had put himself in the wrong by losing his temper and abusing his subordinate, hastily mounted his horse and galloped after him to the next bungalow. Finding Kâmta Prasâd resting there after his exertions, he began apologetically, meaning to ask the other's pardon, while at the same time insisting on an explanation of his conduct. " I didn't mean to insult you, Kâmta Prasâd," he blurted out, " or to use bad language : but really the sight of you mucking up the bath-room and spitting all over the floor was—damn it, Sir, doesn't a man in your position know how to behave like a gentleman ? You—I—!" And poor Barry, the soul of order and efficiency, was so carried away with his mental picture of that bungalow, that he lost his head again, and his intended apologies degenerated into another flow of profanity and vituperation. Alarmed a second time, Kâmta Prasâd again rushed out, and covered the distance to the bridge faster than he had ever bicycled before. Again Barry recovered his composure as quickly as he had lost it ; again he leaped into the saddle and galloped after his assistant. At the bungalow adjoining the bridge almost the same scene was repeated. Barry began coolly, asking to be excused for his sudden temper and foul language, and explaining that they were prompted by his long day in the heat, by his discovery of fraudulent contract-work, and by the spectacle of that disgusting sitting-room, that unspeakable bath-room. But at this point his feelings were a third time too

much for him ; and a third time he piled the Pelion of passion upon the Ossa of insult. Curses and maledictions poured almost unconsciously from his mouth, until the panic-stricken Kâmta Prasâd fled for the third time, and, since there was no rest house lower down stream, cycled for his life back to the half-way bungalow again. For the third time repentance seized his chief almost immediately, and his bewildered horse brought him to the house almost as soon as his assistant.

Men in clubs who relate this story over their whiskey pegs generally add, with more picturesque detail than truth, that this backwards and forwards process went on for the rest of the day, Kâmta Prasâd perpetually scorching from house to house along the river bank, and Barry perpetually galloping after him, dismounting, beginning with apologies, and ending with spluttering expletives conjured up his own explanations. But the fact is that after the third ride and the fourth interview Barry felt that his indignation had exceeded all the bounds of possible remedy, and the two men separated, and spent an exhausted night in different bungalows.

But to Kâmta Prasâd this deplorable, if humorous, incident presented the opportunity he sought to humiliate the white man, and escape from his official clutches. He reported the affair, with appropriate exaggerations, to the Government, and Barry was soon (as the club-men put it) "on the mat," and being too candid to deny anything, had to send a written apology. He lost all chance of a C.I.E., was reduced in rank, and forced to go on long leave, instead of seeing the completion of his beloved bridge. Kâmta Prasâd's collusion with dishonest contracts escaped censure in the confusion

caused by this scandal ; he remained on as executive engineer, under a more complacent chief, till the bridge was finished, occupied a conspicuous place at the ceremonial opening by an exalted official, and had his name carved on coping stones and other conspicuous parts of the work. But as his reputation was anything but good, he lost his appointment (which was at best only temporary), when the special staff came under restriction ; and, regarding this as an additional grievance, he became more anti-British than ever. This feeling however did not deter him from trying to get into European society. With money accumulated while he was in power on the bridge, he bought land, set up as an aristocrat, motored, cricketed and entertained, and became a candidate for membership of the club in a large station. But his social veneer was too thin to deceive anyone but a globe-trotter, his manners, though insinuating, were insincere and disagreeable, his ideas and standards were out of harmony with those prevailing in the club. Besides, the story of the bungalows on the bank of the Sarju was by now all over the province, and though Kâmta Prasâd regarded that incident, with the consequent humiliation of Barry, as a personal triumph for himself, it is to be feared that European society took a very different view. At any rate, when the ballot-boxes were opened, the new Indian candidate was found to be heavily blackballed ; and this mortification embittered him more than anything in his previous experience. There is no more potent cause of the racial alienation of the intelligentsia of India than their exclusion from European clubs and drawing-rooms. These are places for the social intercourse of people of

similar up-bringing and of ways and standards mutually intelligible ; admittance to them has nothing to do with wealth, position or political importance. A club is an institution for bringing together people who want to meet each other and share in certain pursuits. The members of this club did not want to meet Kâmta Prasâd, so they excluded him. It was not a question, though he himself thought it was, of race or of implied inferiority : it was simply a question of difference, and of social enjoyment. But it was impossible to tell Kâmta Prasâd that he was disliked and avoided because he was an "outsider." Barry, who had attempted to do so, had lost both his temper and his appointment in the effort.

After a while Kâmta Prasâd, finding his social ambitions thwarted and his funds running low, obtained congenial employment on a nationalist newspaper, where he could indulge his racial venom with comfortable impunity. This led him into politics, and he soon found that the possession of an acrimonious pen and tongue brought with it a notoriety which was highly gratifying to his vanity. His articles and speeches were believed to be instrumental in forcing concessions out of Government ; and when with the introduction of the reformed constitution a prominent agitator was elevated to the high office of Minister, that great man appointed Kâmta Prasâd to be his personal secretary. What the first holder of the portfolio of education and communications sought in his new position was, of course, vast personal importance and influence, a showy retinue of henchmen, plenty of adulation, and stately discussions on broad political issues—platitudes for preference. What he did *not*

seek was intricate administrative details, heavy files of papers, or long tiresome interviews with place-hunters. These disagreeable tasks he proposed to make over to his personal secretary, and Kâmta Prasâd was just the man for the job, since, in addition to his natural ability and glib fluency in speech, writing and report drafting, he could pose as an "expert" in public works by virtue of his three or four years on the Sarju bridge project. The new secretary took to the spectacular part of his post with avidity, and was also quite ready for hard work if he saw a reward at the end of it. Many Indians are capable of surprisingly long spells of sedentary labour, if inspired by the hope of pleasing those above them, in whose hands lie the springs of promotion and of profit. And so Kâmta Prasâd spared no pains to satisfy his chief, and they agreed famously in all matters of first-class principle—such as keeping their own departments and achievements in the limelight, and excluding Europeans from all desirable posts. As to interviewing place-hunters and needy relatives, here the secretary was in his element. Ever since the days when he gave out contracts for the Sarju bridge, he had revelled in the exercise of patronage, and, apart from the profits which naturally flow from power, he felt quite uplifted when the verandahs outside his room were thronged with claimants hungry for appointments.

One day in his place in council the Minister for communications was bombarded with a fire of questions anent the Sarju bridge. Was it true that some outworks were collapsing? that defective work was coming to light? that heavy supplementary estimates for repairs were already necessary,—in spite of the fact that the

original construction had cost more time and money than the designers had anticipated ? The Minister, baffled for the moment, demanded notice of these embarrassing questions, only adding slyly that the bridge had been completed under the bureaucratic regime, before the inception of "responsible government." The questions themselves he referred to Kâmta Prasâd, who suggested that a personal visit to the bridge and its prospective works was desirable. So the Minister and his secretary proceeded in state to the Sarju, and took boats and motor-cars up and down the river and its banks. Lâla Kâmta Prasâd was careful to accompany his chief on all the trips of inspection ; for he had good reason to know—none better—where all the hidden defects were, and was therefore in the best possible position to make sure that the Minister should see only what was good for him, *and nothing else*. So they conscientiously admired the stately bridge itself, its massive piers, its imposing girders, forged in Darlington but rivetted in India, and its graceful facade inscribed in a prominent place with the name of Lâla Kâmta Prasâd, executive engineer. As to the protective works upstream, there seemed to be a quantity of leakage in the north bank, but the secretary-expert airily dismissed this as natural percolation from the subsoil, and tactfully diverted attention to the splendid sweep of the superstructure. But the great man, heroically resolving to show the council and the world that he was *not* in the hands of his subordinates, determined to examine this apparent leakage from above ; so they climbed to the top of the huge dam of masonry, which blocked up the biggest of the northern ravines, and together they leaned

over the parapet and watched the sucking eddies of the brimming Sarju below their feet. There appeared to be an abnormal amount of moving water in the ravine on the side away from the river, but this too was lightly explained by Kâmta Prasâd by reference to the technical doctrine of percolation ; and the two men turned to look at the marble slab at the top of the dam, which was inscribed thus :—

Erected 190- to 190-, while
Lâla Kâmta Prasâd
was Executive Engineer in charge.

As they gazed at this striking monument, the secretary tried to divert his chief by playful allusions to a village superstition. "Ignorant persons believe," he said, "that human sacrifice is required for the safety of every great bridge. If no labourers are accidentally killed during construction, at any rate it is necessary to bury certain dead persons beneath the foundations. Sarju Ji is supposed to resent being spanned, and to demand victims in propitiation." "Extraordinary superstitions of unlettered rustics," sneered the other with a yawn ; "superior men of education cannot believe such rubbish. At any rate you and I should not be alarmed at such village bogies. You at least have acquired credit and merit from the bridge." Kâmta Prasâd joined in his chief's laugh, and added :—"That is true, and if any victim was necessary, it was surely Mr. Barry, who was removed from important appointment, which could just as well be filled by deserving Indian."

As he spoke the subdued gurglings of the chafing water

below them suddenly swelled into a terrific, explosive roar. The ground beneath their feet rose, then fell, then cracked asunder deep down to the foundations. An avalanch of seething waves thirty feet high swept the two men headlong down the ravine, and dashed the life out of them amid a hurling pandemonium of boulders wrenched from the dam. The breach widened as the defective foundations gave way, and hundreds of tons of rock and masonry swept violently along in a moving wall of water, now a quarter of a mile wide. The mighty Sarju, disdaining the puny human efforts to harness its waves, carved out a new channel a mile broad, and devastated the whole country-side to the north, leaving the great bridge serene and intact high and dry above a labyrinth of shallow dwindling streams and rapidly rising islands. Five miles away to the north the railway embankment was irreparably breached, and, tossed up on the side of the permanent way, there lay the mangled body of a man, side by side with a marble slab which recorded his name. Of the many victims exacted by the outraged Sarju, this one at least had been claimed under an eternal law—the law of retributive justice.

TWO WOMEN

Hanson, civil surgeon, was talking to his wife. "My dear," he "said, you really must get another *ayah*. This respectable old party you took over from your mother is getting past her work. She spends half the time asleep, or in a state of torpor, when she ought to be looking after the baby ; and she certainly is not as clean as she ought to be."

"I know," replied his wife, "and she is half blind too : she gets all wrong about times, from not being able to read the clock properly : and—what's more—she makes mistakes with baby's food ; the other day I couldn't imagine what was wrong with his appetite, until I tasted his milk, and found she had mixed salt with it instead of sugar." She'll be letting you down badly one of these days," suggested Hanson ; "I really think we must get rid of her : and her husband, Nâki the sweeper, must go also ; he's not up to heavy work any more. I suppose we must give them both a retiring pension, as they have been with us five years, and were about twenty years with your people before that."

"Why do they call him by such a ridiculous name as *Nâki* ? " interrupted Mrs. Hanson rather irrelevantly ; "it isn't his real name, is it ? All the other servants seem to think it a sort of joke."

"So it is," said Hanson ; "his real name is Parshâdi ; but *nâk* means nose ; so he has had the nickname of *Nâki* or *Nosey* ever since he was a boy, on account of

his great crooked nose, and the way he uses it. Haven't you noticed him sniff ? ”

“ Haven't I ? ” retorted his wife ; “ and expectorate too ; the noise he makes snorting and clearing his throat before he comes in to clean the bathroom makes me shiver whenever I hear it ! ”

Hanson laughed :—“ That's only his way of being respectful and giving warning of his approach without the necessity of resorting to a handkerchief. But let's get back to the point. What about dismissing them both into honourable retirement on half pay ? ”

“ I don't like to send *ayah* away,” reflected Mrs. Hanson ; “ she looked after me when I was an infant myself, and was with mother nearly her whole time in India. Besides, she simply worships baby and would hate leaving him ; and she's very gentle and respectful, and wonderful at massaging my head when I have a headache ;—though I must admit she forgets things, and lately she has been muddling up my clothes dreadfully.”

“ Well then,” replied the husband, “ We might keep them on for a bit ; but you must get an assistant *ayah* ; you can't be looking after the child yourself day and night, you know, with the hot weather coming on.”

To this Mrs. Hanson agreed. And as soon as it was known in the bazar that the “ doctor memsahib ” wanted an *ayah*, there was a small crowd of candidates in the verandah, each with her sheaf of *chits*. The one selected was a young Muhammadan widow of thirty, who had excellent certificates and looked bright, clean and competent. Her full name was Daulat-un-nissa, but she was always called Daulia—a convenient abbreviation. She soon made herself useful—almost indispensable—

in the nursery and bedroom, and relieved the mother of innumerable duties. She was punctual, and even cheerful, and was specially good with the child, whom she would keep quiet and amused for hours together. She was disliked however by Sitia, the old *ayah*, who openly distrusted and disparaged her, and resented being (as she felt) ousted by the younger woman, and supplanted alike in the confidence of the mistress and the affections of the baby. At first the causes of friction which arose were easily smoothed over by the exercise of a little tact ; but as time went on, Mrs. Hanson was disturbed by events hitherto unknown in her household. The first was trivial enough. She had been buying some carved silver ornaments in the verandah from a *box-wallah* from Delhi, and a few minutes later she heard shrill voices in the direction of the *ayahs'* outhouses. The two women were quarreling about the division of the *haq* or commission, which body-servants in India always exact from tradesmen who sell things to their *sahibs* and *memsahibs*. The *box-wallah* admitted the propriety of paying a fee to *one ayah*, as the customary price of her goodwill and future recommendations ; he had indeed allowed for this in his charges to the mistress for the ornaments. But two *ayahs* he did not recognise ; it was not cricket ; so the two were driven to divide up the emolument properly due to one, and while Daulia claimed a full half, Sitia, as senior *ayah*, demanded two thirds. This vociferous quarrel was soon composed by the *sahib*, who shortly forgot all about it. But presently there were more sinister developments. Small articles began to disappear from bedrooms, nursery and bathroom—places to which practically no one had access

except the two *ayahs* and the sweeper. At first only annoying trifles were pilfered—a handkerchief, a pillow-slip, or a cheap brooch ; and Mrs. Hanson scarcely noticed their loss, or thought she had mislaid them. But presently a ring, a travelling rug, and the baby's rattle disappeared, besides some silver articles. This could not be overlooked. Search and enquiry were fruitless ; so Hanson assembled the servants, and threatened to send for the police, if the missing things were not produced in twenty-four hours. This threw the whole compound in agitation. If there is one thing more than another which disturbs a community of Indians, it is an investigation by the police : for this means indignity, trouble, distress, suspicion ; the innocent will have their houses searched and goods and chattels upset ; the ignorant will have invidious and reluctant statements extracted from them ; peace and harmony will disappear in mutual suspicion ; factions will be formed ; and there will be loss in reputation, if not in pocket, however honest the investigation may be. So to avoid all this, pressure was put by the other domestics upon Nâki and the *ayahs*, till they volunteered to have their houses searched by the *jamadar* and *bearer* (the heads of the establishment) in the presence of the *sahib*. When this was done, nothing was found in Daulia's room, but in a cooking pot on a shelf in Sitia's quarters was found the baby's rattle—nothing else. This seemed a damning piece of evidence, and Mrs. Hanson was much distressed. Hanson himself was even more perplexed ; but he did not seriously suspect Sitia. “ Is it likely,” he said to his wife, “ that a woman who had stolen a lot of valuables, and upon whom suspicion would natur-

ally fall, would conceal a trivial and easily-identifiable thing in an obvious place like a cooking pot on an open shelf? That is just the place which would be chosen by an enemy who was in a hurry to plant the theft on someone else. The person we want to find is someone who had a down on the old party or her husband. *Adâwat* (malice or hatred) is the commonest of all motives for crime in India."

A little later Hanson was working in his office room, when he heard approaching from outside a series of violent sniffs, snorts and expectorations. Nâki was evidently at hand, with his usual respectful preparations; and sure enough in a minute or two the sweeper was ushered in by the orderly. "Huzur," he said, folding his hands, "your humble slave and senior *ayah* have eaten your honour's salt, and the salt of memsahib's people for twenty-five years, and the name of thief has never been used of us. This affair is an affair of *adâwat*."

"So I think, Nâki," replied the master; "but who can be the thief except one of the *ayahs*?"

"The Huzur's words are true," was the answer; "but it is not for a humble slave to mention names to Huzur. Will your honour be good enough to release us from service? As for the other stolen things, let search be made in houses in the city."

"I will think about it, Nâki, and see what the police say. As for you and your wife, you have served memsahib and her family honestly for many years, and I do not suspect you.—You have leave to go."

Nâki departed, and immediately outside his relief from the embarrassing interview was audible in another noisy storm of spitting and throat-clearing. Hanson

sent for the head of the city police, and told him what had occurred, adding that he did not want a scandal and disturbance amongst his domestics, but it might be as well to keep an eye upon the younger *ayah's* associates in the bazar. No further clue however was found ; and meantime the civil surgeon's household was disquieted by something more serious. The baby fell ill ; there was a touch of bronchitis, brought on by unexpected chills in the hot weather and complicated by teething. Both the *ayahs* rose to the occasion, but especially Daulia, who seemed to have a remarkable gift for soothing the child's fretfulness and keeping him quiet. How she occupied her leisure, or what she did when she went to the bazar, no one knew ; but during her spells of duty she was clean, attentive, and cheerful ; and it was a grief to old Sitia that her darling seemed to prefer Daulia's nursing to her own.

One night Hanson and his wife had to go to an official dinner-party, and though the child's ailment seemed to be approaching its crisis and he was very restless and fretful, the engagement was one which could not well be broken. The air was intolerably stifling, and the little one was whining feverishly : but everything possible had been done, and it was Daulia's night on duty ; and if anyone could put him to sleep she could. As they drove through the sultry night, Hanson muttered :—" Can't make out why my drugs don't seem to take effect on the child. Something funny about his stomach. Are you sure he gets all the things I order for him ? "

" Quite sure, Robert ; I see every bit of food and medicine myself.—Look at that heavy yellow cloud ; it looks like a dust-storm coming."

“ I hope it will clear the air,” replied Hanson ; “ I’m sure the child will get better, if we have a little rain to cool things down.”

All through dinner the heat was overwhelming, and the mosquitoes were a torment, especially to the ladies’ ankles. But as the men were joining the ladies in the drawing-room, the storm burst. A dull roar from the west rose to a howl, then to a shriek. A hurricane of hot dust poured through the house; and before the servants had time to shut the numerous western doors, using all their force to do so, the wind had circled round and was tearing in from the east. It was a cyclone, and fierce blasts of air bombarded the bungalow from every side at once. Curtains flapped horizontally in the air like flags in a storm, cushions and pictures were hurled across the room, folded umbrellas in the entrance hall were twisted and turned inside out, and sheaves of thatch from the roofs of outhouses and porch were whirled and strewn all over the verandahs. But the nucleus of the cyclone seemed to pass as suddenly as it had come. In ten minutes the wind had moderated, and soon afterwards came the refreshing down-pour. The doors were opened, the sweet scent of the moistening of parched earth streamed in, and half an hour later all the guests, having with great difficulty disentangled their respective wraps from a medley of confusion in the hall and verandahs, were on their way home. They drove cautiously ; for those whose way lay along the path of the cyclone found trees and logs athwart the road. Everyone was anxious about the fate and state of his own house, and Hanson and his wife were relieved to find that their bungalow looked much the same as ever, having

apparently been struck only by the edge of the storm. But what was that sagging of the roof above the nursery? There was a hole, and bricks and plaster must have fallen in. They rushed into the baby's room, and beheld a strange sight. The floor was wet with rain which had poured through the roof, and was strewn with fragments of plaster. Face downwards, spread-eagled over the bed, lay Sitia ; not Daulia, whose time on duty it was, but Sitia the old *ayah*. She had been struck on the back of the head by a heavy piece of plaster, and lay there motionless, unconscious. Beneath her outspread body lay the child, unharmed, sound asleep. Fortunately the old woman was only stunned, and was soon revived with brandy. But how could a wakeful, feverish child have slept calmly through all that shrieking, tearing storm, with doors banging, and bricks and plaster crashing down into the room round and even on the bed? Hanson felt the pulse, opened the eyes, smelt the breath. It could be only one thing—opium. An emetic was soon fetched, and the child roused to swallow it. When it took effect, there could no longer be any doubt ; and, with the help of a few words from Sitia, it was easy to piece together the story of what had happened. Ignorant Indian women habitually use opium to soothe their own children, and unscrupulous *ayahs* will sometimes conceal it in their finger nails, and administer it to induce sleep when their charges are ill or fretful. This was evidently the secret of Daulia's special facility in making baby quiet and ready for sleep ; and the introduction of opium into his system would account for the ineffectiveness of the medicines given him for bronchitis and fever. On this particular occasion she had wanted a

night out, and, wakeful as he was, had sent him into this heavy torpor with an unusually large dose of opium. In her absence the cyclone had come, and the loving old Sitia, anxious for the baby more than for herself, knowing that her mistress was out, and distrusting the younger *ayah*, had hurried to the nursery, and found the child asleep, but deserted. When the walls rattled and the roofs shook, she heaped pillows on each side of the child's body, and braced her own frame face-downwards across the bed, so as to shelter the little one from the debris falling from the roof. She had probably saved his life, and had certainly risked her own.

Next morning it became possible to trace Daulia's movements also. The nucleus of the cyclone had been only a few hundred yards wide, and had swept in a nearly straight line across the civil station and city. Within this line trees had been blown down, and houses wrecked ; outside it the damage was slight. The area of destruction covered a part of the Muhammadan quarter; and when this was examined by the authorities, they found one house with roof collapsed and doorway blocked with rubble. Digging their way in, they heard low moans, and found two figures lying on the floor—a man and a woman. The woman was Daulia ; beneath her was the stolen rug, on her finger was the stolen ring, and all about the floor of her paramour's room were the stolen ornaments. The cyclone had evidently overwhelmed them just as they were gloating over their ill-gotten spoils.

In the hospital they were both nursed back to life, and soon afterwards prosecuted and sent to prison. The fever-stricken baby did not take long to recover,

and September and October in the Hills compensated both mother and child for the horrors and anxieties of the hot weather. Old Sitia and her husband were rewarded with an ample pension for their long service and devotion, and the former was often permitted to see and caress the child whose life she had guarded. But the Hansons will make no more experiments with Indian *ayaks* : they now have a European nurse for their children.





UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 963 211 8

